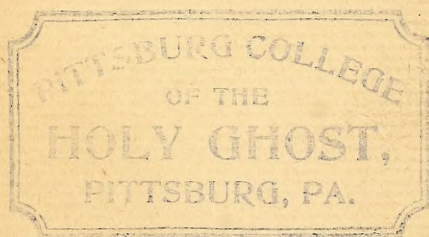


THE SERAPHIC KEEPSAKE

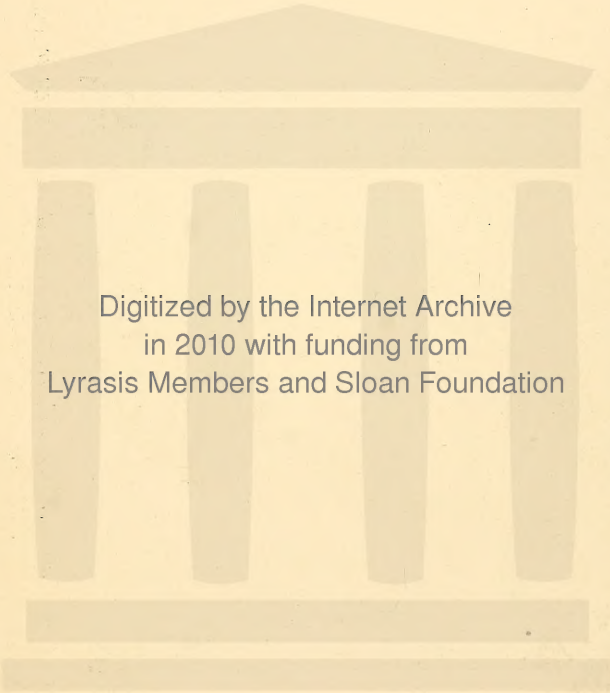
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BROTHER LEO ON MOUNT ALVERNA SHADING HIS EYES FROM THE
VISION OF THE SERAPH

From a della Robbia fragment in the South Kensington Museum.

The Seraphic Keepsake:

A Talisman against Temptation

written for Brother Leo

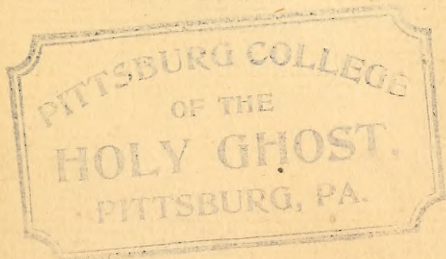
By Saint Francis of Assisi:

also his Words of Counsel and
Praise of God Most High

PRINTED IN FACSIMILE FROM THE SAINT'S HAND-
WRITING, AND SET FORTH IN ENGLISH BY

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THE SERAPHIC KEEPSAKE

I

FOREWORD

BROTHER LEO, whose portrait forms my frontispiece, joined Saint Francis of Assisi after the first approbation of his Institute by Pope Innocent III. in the year of our Lord 1210. It is just possible that he had been with his Master some time before, tending the lepers in Rivo Torto, where first the Order of Friars Minor took form and substance. In any case, Brothers Leo, Bernard, Giles, and Silvester were with Saint Francis when he went to Rome. It is but an accident that Dante fails to mention the *pecorella di Dio*—"God's little sheep"—as one of the Seraphic Father's "family."

His life has yet to be written in our language, but this is not the place to attempt it. And, in point of fact, to write

his life would be to write first an intimate story of the last five years of the life of Saint Francis, and then a history of the long struggles within his Order.

The first of the autograph documents described and reproduced in these pages will serve to make one thing clear—the trouble and distress in which Brother Leo lived when he was separated from his Master, and his absolute trust in the Seraphic Father's power to counsel and to console. The second document—for the "Praise of God Most High" and the Blessing of Brother Leo are found on the same sheet of paper—will show him as the intimate companion, secretary, and son of Saint Francis. And this second document will again show us Brother Leo troubled by temptations "not of the flesh, but of the spirit." For the Blessing was written to deliver him from a temptation, and so well fulfilled its purpose that during the rest of his life—and he did not die till the year 1271—he wore it about his person. That is why I have called this little book "The Seraphic Keepsake."

It is to be regretted that we have no

early portrait of the Blessed Leo. He figures, it is true, in many of Giotto's frescoes at Assisi, but only as one of the Companions, and therefore only as a conventional Friar Minor. There is one very beautiful portrait of him, and it occurs in a work of art which would have been specially appropriate for the illustration of this little book — I mean the bas-relief by Andrea della Robbia (1435-1525), of Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata, which stands over an altar in the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels, near Assisi. But this bas-relief has already been reproduced for English readers of the Franciscan story in one of the "Temple Classics" volumes. By chance I hit upon what must surely be a portrait of Brother Leo in the Museum at South Kensington. It is a high-relief described as a "fragment of an Altar-piece representing Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata," and was executed in the Della Robbia school. You will recognise in it Brother Leo overcome by the brightness of the light that shone on Mount Alverna when our Lord, appearing crucified between the wings of the Seraph, imprinted upon

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the hands and feet and side of His closest follower since the Apostles the wound and nails of His Passion.

“ And when, in thirst to witness by his death,
In the proud Sultan’s presence he’d revealed
Christ and the Twelve who followed Him in faith,
But found that people too unripe to yield,
And would not vainly linger, but retraced
His way to harvest the Italian field,
’Twixt Tiber and the Arno, in a waste
Of rocks, from Christ the final seal he drew,
Which for two years upon his limbs was placed.

*. . . nel crudo sasso, intra Tevere ed Arno,
da Cristo prese l’ ultimo sigillo,
che le sue membra due anni portarno.”*

—*Paradiso*, xi. 100-114.

And now let me introduce my documents. There are three of them, each written by the hand of Saint Francis and preserved through the six-and-three-quarter centuries since his death.

It has been said that, next to a portion of the actual body of a saint, no relic has so great value for us as his, or her, handwriting. I do not think we should, many of us, care to make a classification of relics in the order of their value. But

in the order of their interest for us it would be something of a paradox to maintain that a bone of a Saint is superior to a letter written by him. Brother Body when stripped of his garment of flesh loses such beauty as he may have possessed, and ceases to be distinctive of any one soul. But we have something of the illusion of the Saint's presence with us when we look upon words written by his own hand. There is something of a man's soul in every sentence he frames; there is no writing so rough and unlettered but it contrives to let the soul peep forth.

It would be a mistake to treat any one of the three autographs in isolation from the other two. Not merely the same handwriting but the same style and the same habit of thought are to be remarked in each. We may distinguish them as words of praise to God Most High, words of Counsel, and words of Blessing to Brother Leo; nevertheless, their most distinctive feature is the one they have in common—all are words of Saint Francis. He speaks in one as the Father of the flock in which Leo was pre-eminently "the little sheep

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of God," in another as the troubadour of the Most High, and in the third as one who had received from our Lord our Lord's own wounds. In each he speaks as Saint Francis, the Man and the Saint.

II

WORDS OF COUNSEL—THE LETTER TO BROTHER LEO

Habent sua fata libelli—documents, like men, have their various fortunes. We are prepared by the long experience mankind has summed up in this saying for some surprises in all matters of literary research. Of its truth there is perhaps no more perplexing instance than the mysterious loss and re-appearance of a document which we should have expected to be preserved with the utmost care and reverence throughout the ages—a letter in the handwriting of Saint Francis of Assisi, addressed to his intimate disciple, confessor and secretary, Brother Leo of Viterbo.

The history of this small piece of parchment (it is five and one-eighth inches long by two and three-eighths inches broad) is as brief as it is perplexing. It issued suddenly from the kingdom of oblivion in the year 1604, and remained in the Sacristy of the

Conventual Fathers at Spoleto for some twenty years—as though in honour of the four-hundredth anniversaries of the events in the life of him who wrote it. Soon after the year 1623, when Wadding's collection of the writings of Saint Francis was published, it disappeared again. The waters of Lethe had closed over the precious parchment by the year 1661; for it was then that one Jacobilli published a catalogue of all the relics preserved in the churches of Umbria, and, as he makes no mention of it, we conclude that this Letter was by that time either out of Umbria or in the hands of one who knew neither its meaning nor its value.¹

But, first, how was it that the Letter disappeared from the year 1271, when its owner, Brother Leo, went to join its author in the heavenly province, until the year 1604? The obvious answer, and the least probable, is what our sceptical friends have long since suggested—that the document is a forgery. But who would dream of fraud on reading its contents? Their

¹ *Catalogo dei Corpi Santi e delle Reliquie Insigni che si conservano in varie Chiese della Provincia dell' Umbria.* Todi, 1661.

simplicity is surely not feigned; nor would any pious forger have produced a letter so entirely free from all details of time and place, so vague in its terms, so faulty in syntax, and withal so tender and so holy.

If I may make my own guess as to what became of the document at the death of Brother Leo, I would suggest that it was left by him to the Abbess and Sisters of the Convent of Saint Clare in Assisi with other "rolls" (*rotuli*). Friar Conrad of Offida, who died in 1306, gave some information concerning these MSS. of Brother Leo's collection to Friar Ubertino of Casale (c. 1259—c. 1338), and this Ubertino had some of them in his possession in the year 1311. Brother Leo left his books and his notes to the Poor Clares; we may be quite sure he did not leave his letter from Saint Francis to the Conventual Fathers of Spoleto, nor his Blessing from Saint Francis to the Conventual Fathers of Assisi. Both were probably left to the Convent of Saint Clare; the Blessing found its way before very long to the great Church at Assisi; and when the Letter came to light in 1604

the Conventuals of Spoleto were its possessors.¹

How the Poor Clares came to part with a letter written by the hand of Saint Francis it is not for us to conjecture. They may have feared for its safety, or parted with it in return for some favour conferred on them. It is well known what difficulties the Poor Clares of that community have had throughout their history to maintain the great Church in a condition befitting the tomb of Saint Clare. But how came they to give the relic to such poor guardians as the Conventual Fathers of Spoleto, who in less than forty years allowed it to disappear?

In the year 1604, then, the Letter was found, we know not how or where. One Fra Paradiso Paradisi, probably a Conventual of Spoleto, took it to the great Church

¹ Ubertino of Casale. "Arbor," Lib. V. MS. Ass. fo. 222. a. 1. . . . "in quibusdam rotulis manu sua conscriptis, quos commendavit in monasterio Sanctæ Claræ custodiendos ad futurorum memoriam . . . cum multo dolore audivi illos rotulos fuisse distractos, et forsitan perditos, maxime quosdam ex eis . . ." In his *Declaratio* at the end of the *Responsio*, published by Father Ehrle in the "Archiv," he speaks of certain words "solemniter conscripta in libro, qui habetur in armario fratrum de Assisio et in rotulis eius quos apud me habeo, manu eiusdem fratris Leonis conscriptis . . ."—See *Speculum Perfectionis*, ed. Sabatier, pp. cxliii.-cl.

at Assisi, and a careful examination of it, and comparison between it and the Autograph Blessing then as now preserved there, was made by Fra Silvestro Bartolucci, Doctor of Theology, and Sacristan. Fortunately, he made a formal document of his conclusions, wrote them out with the approved legal flourishes, and got the Father Guardian of his Community to countersign his attestation. Since his words are as true now as they were three hundred years ago, I give them in full :—

Io, Fra Silvestro Bartolucci d'Assisi, Dottor Teologo e Sagrestano del sagra Convento d'Assisi, con piena et indubitata fede, qualmente ad istanza del P. Fra Paradiso Paradisi, ho confrontata una lettera del sottoscritto tenore con la beneditione scritta di propria mano del nostro Serafico Padre San Francesco, quale si serva fra l'altre Reliquie sante di detto Sagra Convento, et havendo veduto e considerato bene l'uno e l'altro carattere, gl' accenti, lo stile dello scrivere ed altre

I, Brother Silvester Bartolucci of Assisi, Doctor of Theology and Sacristan of the Sagra Convento, with full and unquestionable good faith, as well as at the instance of Fr. Paradiso Paradisi, have compared a letter in the terms below written with the Blessing written with his own hand by our Seraphic Father S. Francis, which is preserved among the other holy Relics of the said Sagra Convento; and having seen and well considered the character of each, the spelling, the style

circonstanze, giudico e tengo per certo, che anche la lettera del tenore infra-scritto sia scritta di propria mano del Serafico Padre San Francesco, mandata da esso a Fra Leone suo compagno, e l'istesso giudicherebbe ancora qualsivoglia c'habbia cognitione di lettere.

Et in fede della verita ricercato del detto Padre Fra Paradiso ho fatta la presente sottoscritta di propria mano.

In Assisi il di 5 d'Agosto, 1604.—Il tenore della sopradetta lettera scritta in poca carta pergamena, e questo che segue, cio e . . .

of the writing, and other indications, am of opinion and hold it for certain that the said letter in the terms below written was also written with his own hand by the Seraphic Father S. Francis, and despatched by him to Brother Leo his companion; and the same decision would be given again by any one who had knowledge of letters.

And in witness of the truth inquired for by the said Fr. Paradiso, I have made these presents subscribed with my own hand.

Assisi, the 5th day of August, 1604.—The terms of the aforesaid letter written on a small parchment sheet, are as follows, that is to say:—

“F. Leo F. Francisco, etc.”

(The text of the Letter is then given as it may be read below.)

Io, Frate Silvestro sopradetto, affermo quanto di sopra di propria mano.

I, the aforesaid Brother Silvester, attest all that is above with my own hand.

The document ends with the witness of the Father Guardian of the S. Convento, Fra Bartolommeo de Perusinis da Fermo, who on the same 5th of August, 1604, signed and sealed it.

Such is the first mention in history of the Letter to Brother Leo ; and it must be admitted that even in our times of scientific precision it would be difficult to make a more accurate description. There can be no possible doubt but that the small parchment found in 1895 is the very same which the Sacristan handled at Assisi in August 1604. It may be asked how it was that Father Paradiso had any doubt of the Letter being what it purported to be. And this suggests either that it had only just come into the possession of the Conventual Fathers of Spoleto, or, more probably, that it had lain forgotten and neglected among their Archives for a century or so.

The first disappearance of the Letter lasted some 333 years, from the death of Brother Leo in 1271 to 1604 ; the second lasted some 270 years. In the year 1623 Wadding's "*Opuscula S. Francisci*" saw the light ; in 1661, as has been said, it was not among the Relics of any Umbrian church. One day early in 1895 one of the Parish Priests of Spoleto, Father Clito Cardinali, brought a small piece of parchment to Mgr. Faloci Pulignani, the Editor

of the *Miscellanea Franciscana*. He tested its "identity" much as Fra Silvestro had tested it nearly three centuries earlier. Satisfied that the document was genuine, containing as it did the same text that he had read in the *Opuscula* of Wadding, Mgr. Faloci Pulignani presented it on the 14th of February 1895 to Pope Leo XIII. It is kept in the Vatican now.

Mystery clings like an atmosphere to this document. We assume that Brother Leo kept it with him, as he kept another Relic of his Master, to be described presently, till the day of his death; we conjecture that he left it with other papers to the care of the Poor Clares at Assisi; we do not know how they came to part with it, nor how the Conventuals of Spoleto obtained it just three hundred years ago; we cannot imagine what became of it after 1623, when, according to Wadding, it was still at Spoleto; and we have yet to learn how Father Cardinali came by it in 1895. To crown all, it is, as we shall see, matter of pure conjecture when it was written. Nevertheless, as M. Sabatier has written, "the authenticity of the letter itself cannot

be questioned; *on n'invente pas plus des lettres de saint qu'on ne s'improviser artiste."*

In our times no one, not even the greatest expert in palæography, thinks of making a sworn attestation, like Fra Silvestro, of the truth of his own conclusions in such matters. This is one of the fruits and marks of progress. Nor should we feel any added confidence in the identity of this letter had we an affidavit even of Mgr. Faloci Pulignani to that effect. That the words were written by Saint Francis will appear obvious, *pace* M. Sabatier, to any one comparing the handwriting with that of the autograph Blessing at Assisi; and we have Brother Leo's written word for it that this last was "written by the Blessed Francis with his own hand." The chain of proof is complete when the writing of Brother Leo's notes to the Blessing is compared with that of the Breviary known to have been written by him, and now kept at San Damiano, the Convent just outside Assisi, which has survived the tender mercies of the Italian Government, owing to the generosity of the late Lord Ripon. Moreover, no objection has, so far as I

know, been brought against it, and this silence of the critical justifies its acceptance by all of us.¹

But before I give a reproduction of this Letter from Saint Francis to his chosen companion, the impression which a similar reproduction (*Miscellanea Franciscana*, vol. vi. p. 37, 1895) made upon a very good judge of such matters must be recorded. M. Sabatier² believes firmly in the authenticity of the letter; that seems to him evident from its style and terms. But it is, of course, another question whether the parchment now in the Vatican is the original autograph. "When we examine the photograph," he writes, "we are at first tempted absolutely to reject its 'identity.' The handwriting, compared with that of the autograph of Assisi, has about it something loose and soft; many of the words

¹ The authenticity of the San Damiano breviary is called in question by the Bollandists in a review of *De Breviario S. Francisci* by Père Edouard d'Alençon (*Anal. Bollandiana*, vol. xviii. p. 203), on the ground that it contains the *Ordo Romanus*, or shortened office then in use at the Papal Court, and that Saint Francis would not have used this office. But, as Père Hilarin of Lucerne has abundantly proved in *St. François et le Breviaire Romain* (Paris, 1901), it was just this Papal office that the Friars Minor adopted.

² *Speculum Perfectionis*, pp. lxxiii.-lxxv.



present a remarkable analogy with those of the Assisi document; but at the same time they show an indecision in the formation of the letters, and these have rather long strokes, which are characteristic of hands of the end of the fourteenth century, or even of a still later time. But for the unfavourable impression of the first glance another quite different will be substituted by attentive examination. Is it an illusion? It seems to me that one can distinguish two hands written, as it were, one over the other; the one, primitive, awkward, and irregular, but precise and without hesitation; the other, added afterwards. And I begin to think that three or four centuries ago some simple pious person may perhaps have tried to refresh the original strokes of the writing, which were beginning to fade. It might perhaps be thought that we have before us a traced copy, but my first hypothesis is more in harmony with the actual state of the document."

It may be so; but we need not take this theory too seriously, since M. Sabatier, when he formed it, had not seen the original. If there be indeed two hands, there need be

little doubt as to whose is the second. The honours—if it be an honour to refresh with new ink venerable words partially obliterated by time—must lie between Fra Paradiso Paradisi and the Sacristan, who was also Doctor of Theology, Fra Silvestro Bartolucci.

These are the words of the Letter set forth in order as they may still be deciphered :—

LINE

1. F . (RATER) LEO F . (RATE) FRAN CIS SCO TUO SALUTEM ET PACEM . ITA DICO TIBI
FILI MEI SICUT MATER . QUIA
OMNIA VERBA QUE DIXIMUS

H

5. IN VIA, BREVITER IN AOE(C) VERBO
DISPONO ET CONSILIO, ET Q(UAN)
DO POST OPORTET PROPTER
CONSILIUM VENIRE AD ME
QUIA ITA CONSILIO TIBI IN QUO-

10. CUMQUE MODO MELIUS

TIBI

VIDETUR A PLACERE DOMINO
DEO ET SEQUI VESTIGIA ET PA-
UPERTATEM SUAM FACIATIS
CUM BENEDITIONE DOMINI

15. DEI ET MEA OBEDIENTIA
ET SI TIBI sibi (SIT) NECESSARIUM (AD)
ANIMAM TUAM VEL PROPTER ALIAM
CONSOLATIONEM TUAM ET VIS

D

LEO VENIRE A A ME VE(NIAS).

Line 1. Frater Franciscus tuus, *Wadding*; f. Francisco tuo, *Faloci Pulignani, Cozza-Luzzi, Sabatier*.

Line 3. Fili mi, *Wad.*; fili mei, *F. Pul., C.-Luz., Sab.*

Line 6. Consilio, quoniam, *C.-Luz.*; consilio, et si, *F. Pul.*;

LINE

1. Brother Leo, thy Brother Fran-cis-sco wishes thee salvation and peace. So I speak to thee, son of mine, like a mother ; and indeed all the words which we have spoken
5. in the way briefly in this word I set forth and advise ; and when later it is expedient for the sake of my advice to come to me (and indeed I advise thee to come) in what-
10. soever way it best seemeth to thee to please the Lord God and to follow His footsteps and his poverty, you should act in that way with the blessing of the Lord
15. God and with merit of obedience to me. And if it be necessary to thy soul for other thy consolation, and thou desirest,
19. Leo mine, to come to me, thou shouldst come.
20. ? (Farewell in Christ)?

consilio. Et si, *Wad.*; et si . . . oportet propter te filium (!) venire ad me quia, &c., *Sabatier*.

Line 7. Postea oportet, *Wad.*; dopo (afterwards) oportet, *F. Pul.*; . . . oportet, *C.-Luz.*

Line 9. Quia, *F. Pul.*; quoniam, *C.-Luz.*; ad me, ita, *Wad.*

Line 12. Vestigia ipsius (?) et paup, *Sab.*

Line 16. Et si tibi est, *Wad.*, *F. Pul.*, *C.-Luz.*; . . . necessarium, *F. Pul.*; necessari . . . , *C.-Luz.*; necessarium propter, *Wad.*; et si tibi est necessarium pro anima tua aut propter, *Sab.*

Line 17. Aut aliam, *Wad.*; aut propter aliam, *Sab.*; animam tuam propter aliam, *F. Pul.*, *C.-Luz.*

Line 18. Et vis leo mi, *Wad.*; et vis Leo, *F. Pul.*, *Sab.*; et vis . . . venire, *C.-Luz.*

Line 19. Veni, *Wad.*, *F. Pul.*, *Sab.*; ve . . . , *C.-Luz.*

Line 20. (?) Wadding adds "Vale in Christo."

I have tried by this bald version to convey something of the style of the original. In plain prose it would run thus :—

“Brother Leo, your loving Brother Francis wishes you salvation and peace. I speak to you thus, son of mine, as a mother would ; for all we have talked of on our journey, all my words of counsel, may be summed up in these words, salvation and peace. And when later on you need to come to me to take counsel with me (and I advise you to do so) you must act as you think will be most pleasing to the Lord God, closest to His footsteps, in best accordance with His poverty ; and then you will be acting with the blessing of the Lord God, and will have the merit also of obeying me. And if, apart from the counsel I might give, it is necessary for your soul’s health to come to me to get consolation besides (*aliam*), and you want to come to me, my Leo, why then come.”

We will not linger to discuss readings, a dry task and generally a barren one. I will only say that I for one cannot see in the last letter of the sixth line the word *si* (if) ; nor can I read in the beginning of the seventh the Italian word *dopo*, which means “afterwards.” It is true that there is a trace of Italian elsewhere in the letter. He gives his name its Italian form “Francisco,”

and writes it too as though it were three words, not three syllables; and makes it still more unusual by doubling the “s,” thus, “Fran-cis-sco.” There is some point in this, for it makes the address of the letter less formal, more affectionate. But what could be the point of substituting for the common Latin word *post* (afterwards) its Italian equivalent *dopo*? We have no reason to suppose that Saint Francis would intermingle his Italian and his Latin in such a way. Yet I agree in thinking that the first four letters of the seventh line are *do-po*; and as what others take to be *si* looks to me most like a *q* that has lost its tail, I prefer to read *et quando po* (“and when later”), which makes good sense and good Latin.

If there is no ground for supposing Saint Francis to have used an Italian word in the middle of his Latin sentence, and that because he could not at the moment remember the Latin for *dopo*, there is no doubt about the Italian words in the address. There he calls himself, “Frate Francisco tuo”—thy loving brother Francesco. We should have expected him to write formally, “To Brother

Leo Brother Francis wishes salvation and peace"; he prefers to say, "Dear Brother Leo, salvation and peace to you from your Brother Fran-cis-sco." Saint Francis hated formality. It was all one to him, Italian or Latin, or even French ("though he spake it not aright"),¹ if he had warm feelings to express. He used language not to conceal but to express his feelings; and we have surely something of the illusion of the Saint's own presence with us when we find in his own handwriting this affectionate beginning of a letter which defies all the conventions. The good Wadding, who had all the zeal of the seventeenth century for the verbal accuracy so often fatal to style, was doubtless shocked by the incoherence of the opening words, and corrected them, regardless of the manuscript (*F. Leo, F. Franciscus tuus, &c.*). We have reason to be thankful that

¹ Leg. 3 Soc. III. 10. Cf. 2 Cel. I., 8, *monasterium futurum esse ibidem sanctarum virginum Christi . . . gallice loquens clara voce prophetat*; 3 Soc. VII. 24, *clamabat alta voce in gaudio spiritus ad habitantes . . . dicens gallice eis, &c.*; Julian of Spire, second Nocturn, Resp. I. *Laudes decantat gallice*; Prose Legend, *Domino laudes in gallica lingua decantans*; and Cel. "Leg. Antiqua" (Rosedale, p. 69) *dulcissima melodia spiritus . . . exterius gallicum dabat sonum.*

the document has re-appeared in our time, if it be only because we can restore to the letter its original tone of affection and its characteristic literary "errors."

There is another "error" in the Letter which has been taken very seriously by one writer. M. Sabatier says that the use by Saint Francis of the plural, *faciatis* ("act in that way"), in the middle of sentences all couched in the singular, proves that Brother Leo had spoken to him in the name of a group.¹ Now, what was this group? It was, says M. Sabatier, a group of Friars disposed to rebel against the government of the Order at that time. But in the first place, it is a matter of pure conjecture when this Letter to Brother Leo was written. The only indication we have of its date goes to show that Saint Francis was himself the General of the Order when he wrote it. He tells Brother Leo that if he acts in the way he thinks will be most pleasing to the Lord God, and most in accordance with His poverty,

¹ *Vie de Saint François*, 20th edition, p. 301. M. Sabatier notes that this plural *faciatis* had astonished Wadding. I cannot find any expression of "astonishment" in Wadding's notes.

he will be acting with the blessing of God, and with the merit of obedience to himself, Saint Francis. Would he have spoken of "obedience to himself" if he had not been at the time ruling his own Order? And, in the second place, it is unreasonable to deduce from the accidental use of a plural in a Letter evidently written somewhat hurriedly and familiarly, a theory for which there is no other evidence at all. If Saint Francis is addressing Brother Leo as the leader of a group, how are we to explain the use of the singular throughout the rest of the letter?

It looks as though M. Sabatier had built upon this slender basis the whole theory upon which he elucidates the Letter. He says we possess in the Letter to Brother Leo evidence "of his anxiety to safeguard the spiritual independence of his disciples, even more touching" than the instance of the German friar who asked permission to separate himself from the Order if it ever relaxed in its observance of the Rule. "Leo, much alarmed by the new spirit that was reigning in the Order, had spoken of this to his Master. . . . After an inter-

view, in which he had answered him by word of mouth, Francis, in order to leave no kind of doubt or hesitation in the mind of the Brother he had named the *pecorella di Dio*, also wrote to him as follows, &c."

As I have already suggested, one expression in the Letter, "obedience to me," makes it probable that Saint Francis was General of the Order when it was written. If, therefore, we are to assign some plausible date for the Letter, we must fix upon a time in the life of Saint Francis (1) when he was still General; (2) when he was in Italy—for he speaks of Leo coming to see him; and (3) when his advice would be specially needed by the most faithful of his followers. Now Saint Francis resigned the Generalate to Brother Peter of Catania at the Chapter held at the Portiuncula on the Feast of Saint Michael, September 29, 1220. In the summer of that year he was on his way home from the East; and it is probable that he arrived at Venice in July.¹ We have no ground

¹ It was in August 1220 that Saint Francis compelled the Friars at Bologna to abandon their "house" because he heard that it was called the "Brothers' House" (*audivit quod domus illa diceretur esse fratrum*). According to M. Sabatier, Brother Leo lay ill in the Bologna House at this

for supposing that Brother Leo ever left the side of his Master after the Chapter of 1220. The result of these arguments is, that the first and second conditions under which the Letter appears to have been written are only satisfied by the period between the Saint's return to Italy in July and the Chapter held at the end of September 1220.

That this period was a particularly troubled one in the affairs of the Order is notorious. Indeed, the news brought to Saint Francis while he was in Syria, probably at Acre, was so disturbing that he set out for home at once. Two difficulties had arisen. Cardinal Hugolino, the future Pope Gregory IX., had conferred upon the Second Order, apparently at the request of the Poor Clares of Monticelli, a "privilege" which in effect, if not in intention, took away from them their Franciscan character, and made them for all practical purposes a congregation of

time. But this view rests on two assumptions, which I for one cannot grant :—(1) That Brother Leo was the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis* ; (2) That the Second Life of Thomas of Celano (A.D. 1247) was written after the *Speculum Perfectionis*. It was Thomas of Celano who lay ill at Bologna in August 1220.

Benedictines. Brother Philip, the friar whose task it was to guard the interests of Saint Clare's disciples, had accepted this "privilege," and the Pope on December 9th had confirmed it. (Honorius III. Bull. *Sacrosancta*.) And worse had happened. Friar John of Campello had gathered together a large number of lepers of both sexes and written a rule for them. He was, in fact, attempting to found a new Order; and he had gone to Rome to get the approval of the Pope. A rumour was abroad in May 1220 that the Founder had died, and this had increased the general unrest in the Order.

There was, then, enough and to choose in the state of things in July 1220 to make Brother Leo wish for the counsel of his Master. We may therefore agree with M. Sabatier that the immediate cause of the Letter was the alarm felt by Brother Leo at certain new developments in the Order. On the other hand, there is not a word which suggests "a desire to safeguard the spiritual independence" of his disciples. The essence of the Letter is simply this: Brother Leo was in doubt whether he should or

should not go to consult with his Master, and he is told that his Master only wishes him to decide this question for himself by the ordinary criterion of the Friar Minor—the obligation of “poverty” and the desire to please God by following His footsteps. For the rest, Saint Francis in an affectionate way tells him that all the advice he has to give is contained in the two words “salvation and peace,” but adds at the end that if, apart from his need of advice, he finds it necessary for his soul’s health to have the consolation of seeing his Master, he had better come. I have little doubt but that, in answer to this Letter, Brother Leo went to Saint Francis.

Yet there is one word that arrests the attention: What has “poverty” to do with the question whether Brother Leo should visit his Master or not? We can only answer that the obligation of poverty must be one of the determining factors in any question of conduct that presents itself to the true Friar Minor. Can the reference to poverty in this Letter mean that Leo should consider whether it be not the poorer, and therefore the higher, course

to do without the advice and consolation of Saint Francis?

Ai frati suoi, si come giusta erede, Raccomandò la sua donna più cara, E comandò che l'amas- sero a fede.	His Dearest Lady was his one bequest, Unto his Friars, now his rightful heirs, And "love her faithfully" his last behest.
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NOTE ON THE COMMENTS OF WADDING AND OTHERS

Wadding's short preface and notes to the Letter do not appear to represent a tradition in the Order concerning the occasion of it. He may have seen the original in 1619 at Spoleto, for in that year he "observed very diligently" the autograph at Assisi. But as the Letter had disappeared until the year 1604, there is not likely to have been any tradition about it. His conclusions are probably the fruit of conjecture only, and as such have no natural superiority over our own. His preface is as follows: "As far as I have been able to gather from this short and simple Letter, Leo had suffered some spiritual affliction. And so the Saint gently admonished him with the tenderness almost of a mother, and left him to regain his peace of mind in a certain small community of Religious; and then, fearing the wiles of Satan and the danger to his absent son, exhorted him in the words which follow. They are written by the actual hand of S. Francis, and are preserved among the relics in the sacristy of the Minor Conventuals at Spoleto." The Bollandists quote these words, and say that Wadding's view is exceedingly probable (*omnino verisimiliter*). They add further conjectures: "Possibly this spiritual trouble may have consisted in empty scruples of the mind about practical matters, and the holy Father, desiring to remove these scruples both by the advice he gave him on their journey

and also by this Letter, urged him to do without further care whatever he should judge most pleasing to God (for he knew that Leo was a God-fearing man—*timoratum*); and added that, if, even so, his hesitation continued, he should come to him for advice, if he wished." Neither Wadding nor the Bollandists seem to have observed that the spiritual trouble of Brother Leo consisted merely in doubts whether it would be "pleasing to God and in accordance with His Poverty" that he should go to Saint Francis for counsel and consolation.

Wadding, in note, is more explicit as to the nature of Brother Leo's spiritual trouble, which he thinks was concerned with the method in which he should observe his vows, and the perfection or degree in which he should follow the rule of poverty ("*circa modum observandæ suæ Professionis et de perfectione aut gradu sectandæ paupertatis*"). But elsewhere Wadding seems to advance quite a different view. If there is no evidence for his theory that Brother Leo's trouble was concerned with his observance of the vow of poverty, it is not in itself improbable. His theory that Saint Francis was very anxious "lest Leo should fall by carelessness, or slip into the ambushes of the devil" is inconsistent with all that we know about Leo and could hardly be reconciled with the terms of the Letter. Yet this comment of Wadding's is quoted with strong approval by M. Sabatier, who proceeds to scold the "numerous ecclesiastics" who have edited the works of Saint Francis for not reprinting Wadding's comments on them. It is quite true that the words "*erat ergo anxius, mæstus et trepidus*" serve to describe the mood of Saint Francis when the Letter was written, but it is most improbable that what he feared was Brother Leo's apostasy ("*ne Leo in absentia per negligentiam caderet aut diaboli insidiis laberetur*." Wadding, *Opuscula S.F.*, Antwerp, 1623, p. 66. See *Speculum Perfectionis*, ed. Sabatier, p. lxxiii.).

M. Sabatier describes the Letter as "very plaintive, very tender. There is in the distance weeping and a piercing sorrow which Christian resignation does not succeed in

stifling ; it is like a fragment of a sonata by Chopin played on the evening after the death of a hero." But this is the language of sentimental exaggeration.

The best comments on the document will be found in the *Miscellanea Franciscana*, vol. vi. pp. 32-9. Foligno, 1895 (Mgr. Faloci Pulignani), and in *La Palestra del Clero*, vol. xli. p. 10. Rome, January, 1898. (Abbot Giuseppe Cozza-Luzzi, Sub-Librarian of the S.R.E.) To both these articles I am much indebted, and it is owing to the kindness of Abbot Cozza-Luzzi that I have been able to obtain a reproduction of the document now at the Vatican.

III

THE STORY OF THE STIGMATA

THE relic preserved at Assisi is a small piece of paper on which can still be deciphered, on the one side, the Words of Praise written by Saint Francis in gratitude for the Impression of the Sacred Stigmata, the miracle celebrated by the Church on September 17th, and, on the other, the Words of Blessing which he wrote and signed for Brother Leo, his companion, secretary, and confessor. An introduction designed to give the contents of this precious document their full significance should therefore not only describe how Saint Francis came to write the "Praise of the Most High God" and the Blessing, but should also tell how he received from our Lord the wound and the nails of His Passion. And then a sketch of the relations between Saint Francis and his secretary would not be out of place.

It would be easy to write a book on

the Impression of the Stigmata, or on the life of Brother Leo. But here it will be enough to assume the close relation between Brother Leo and his Master as known, and to quote the two earliest descriptions of the great miracle, and one or two accounts of the writing of the Words of Praise and Blessing. "*Travailler d'après les sources et les citer avec rigueur*"¹; "work with the original authorities and quote them as much as possible." This should be the device of all those who write about the Saints.

The beautiful letter written by Brother Elias in the year 1226, within a few weeks of the death of Saint Francis, has been strangely neglected in modern Franciscan books.² And the reason is not far to seek. Brother Elias is in disgrace with us. Yet there is no reason why the sober historian should be carried away by party spirit in this respect. Ask any Italian friar what he thinks of Brother Elias, and he will

¹ *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xix. p. 371.

² M. Sabatier just mentions it in his Appendix on the Stigmata (*Vie de Saint François*, 20th ed., 1898, p. 404), and translates the passage which I give in Latin below. See also "Sons of Francis," by Anne Macdonell (Dent, 1902), p. 158.

probably tell you that he is in heaven, and owes his admission thither to the prayers of Saint Francis. There is some dispute as to his "dispositions" at the hour of his death, but I think we may accept the verdict I have quoted. For Brother Elias loved Saint Francis as much as any of his companions, and the Franciscan Order owes more to his work than is commonly admitted. What is more to our present point, we owe to him the first description of the nature of the wounds inflicted on Saint Francis upon Mount Alverna; and the letter in which this description occurs should serve to correct such hasty judgments as we may have formed of his conduct, at all events in the earlier years of his stormy career.

I can safely leave the Letter to speak for itself, premising only that the original copy sent to the Provincial of France was at the beginning of the seventeenth century preserved at the Recollect House at Valenciennes in Belgium, where William Spoelberch saw it and copied it for his book, "The Mirror of the Life of Saint Francis and his Companions," which was printed

in 1620. Wadding also obtained a transcript of it from the same House, and published the text in his *Annals* (vol. ii. *ad annum* 1226, xliv.).¹ I can do no better than commend it to you with Wadding's remarks; that the skill of Brother Elias in writing, his erudition in Scriptural quotation, and his filial piety towards his Master clearly appear therein, and that, to judge from this letter alone, none was more devoted or more humble than he.²

"To his beloved Brother in Christ, Gregory, Minister of the Brethren who are in France, and to all his Brethren and ours, Brother Elias, Sinner, wisheth salvation.

"Or ever I begin to speak I sigh (Job iii. 24); and with good cause are my moanings like to the flooding waters (Thren. i. 16), for the dreaded thing I dreaded has come to pass for me, has come to pass also for you; and what I feared has happened to me, has happened

¹ See also the Chronicle of Jordan of Giano, 50, *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. i. p. 16.

² There is an annoying misprint in the Roman edition of the *Annales Minorum* (1732). It should be "nullum magis pium et humiliores," not "magne pium."

also to you. For far from us has been taken our comforter, and he who used to carry us like lambs in his arm (Osee ix. 3) has gone into a strange country (Matt. xxi. 33) even a far land. Beloved of God and men (Eccl. xlv. 6) he has been received into those exceeding bright mansions, he who taught the law of life and discipline to Jacob and left his covenant of peace to Israel. We must rejoice right well because of him, yet must we grieve also. For now that he is gone darkness encompasses us and the shadow of death covers us. Common to all is the loss, but peculiar to me the peril, for he has left me in the very midst of the darkness, encompassed by many cares and oppressed with innumerable afflictions. Wherefore I beseech you, Brethren, grieve with me awhile, for I grieve exceedingly and join in your grief. For we are orphans and fatherless (Thren. v. 3), bereaved of the light of our eyes. Verily, verily, the presence of our Brother and our Father Francis was light, not only to us who were near him, but to those also who were far from us in religion and in life.

For he was a light sent out from the true light, to enlighten them that were in darkness and sat in the shadow of death, that he might direct their feet into the way of peace (Luc. i. 79). Which indeed he did. The Orient from on high enlightened his heart as it were full noon, and kindled his will with the fire of His love. And so, preaching the Kingdom of God and turning the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, he prepared unto the Lord a new people (Luc. i. 17) throughout the whole world. To the islands far off his name has been rumoured, all the countries of the world have marvelled at his marvellous works. Wherefore, Sons and Brethren, be not sorrowful beyond measure, for God the Father of the fatherless will comfort us with His holy comfort, and, if you must weep, Brethren, weep for yourselves, not for him (Luc. xxiii. 28). For in the midst of life we are in death, but he has passed from death to life. Be merry because, before he was taken from us, he blessed all his sons, like another Jacob (Gen. xlix. 2), and forgave all faults that

had been committed or conceived against him by any one of us.

"And, this said, I announce to you great joy, even a new miracle. From the beginning of ages there has not been heard so great a wonder, save only in the Son of God, who is Christ our God. For, a long while before his death, our Father and Brother appeared Crucified, bearing in his body the five wounds which are verily the Stigmata of the Christ; for his hands and feet had as it were piercings made by nails fixed in from above and below, which laid open the scars and had the black appearance of nails; while his side appeared to have been lanced, and blood often trickled therefrom.¹

¹ "Et, his dictis, annuncio vobis gaudium magnum, et miraculi novitatem. A seculo non est auditum tale signum, præterquam in Filio Dei, qui est Christus Deus. Nam (a) diu ante mortem Frater et Pater noster apparuit Crucifixus, quinque plagas, quæ vere sunt stigmata Christi, portans in corpore suo: nam manus eius et pedes quasi puncturas clavorum habuerunt ex utraque parte confixas reservantes (b) cicatrices, et clavorum nigredinem ostendentes, latus vero eius lanceatum apparuit, et saepe sanguinem evaporavit" (c).

(a) Wadding reads "*Non diu*," and Amoni (Leg. 3 Soc. Rome, 1880, p. 105) "*Nam diu*." "*Diu*" is not too strong a word for a period of just over two years in so short a life.

(b) This word should be *reserantes*, for *reservantes* makes nonsense.

(c) ? *evacuavit*.

“While yet his spirit lived in the body there was with him no looking upward ; his countenance was ever downcast ; no limb in him remained without exceeding pain ; and from the contraction of the nerves his limbs were rigid as are wont to be the limbs of a dead man. But after his death his countenance was most beautiful, gleaming with a wondrous brightness, and making glad them who saw it ; and the limbs which before were rigid had been made exceeding supple, allowing themselves to be turned hither and thither according to his position, like the limbs of a tender boy.

“Wherefore, Brethren, bless the God of Heaven, and in the sight of all men (Tob. xii. 6) confess to Him for that He has shown among us His mercy. Be mindful also of our Father and Brother Francis, to the praise and glory of Him who has magnified him among men, and in the sight of Angels has glorified him. Pray for him, even as he asked of us, before his death, and pray *to* him also, that God may make us sharers with him in His holy grace.

“On the fourth day before the Nones of October (Oct. 4), being a Sunday, or rather

in the first hour of the night before the Sunday,¹ our Father and Brother Francis journeyed to Christ. You therefore,² dearest Brethren, whom these present letters shall reach, should follow the footsteps of the people of Israel who mourned Moses and Aaron, their goodly leaders, and with us give passage to your tears, for we are deprived of the comfort of our tender Father. For, albeit it is good to rejoice for Francis, yet is it good also to weep for Francis. Truly, it is good to rejoice with Francis, for he is not dead but gone away to the heavenly market (*cœlestes nundinæ*) bearing with him his purse of money, and will return at the full moon. It is good to weep for Francis, for he that went in and out like Aaron and brought for us from his treasure things new and old, and comforted us in all our tribulation, has been taken from the midst of us, and now we are called orphans and fatherless. But since it is written, 'The poor is committed unto thee, thou

¹ This is the "Umbrian calculation," and means that Saint Francis died during the first hour after sunset on Saturday, October 3, 1226.

² Probably Brother Elias wrote, "*Nos ergo et vos . . . viam demus lacrymis.*" Wadding reads, "*Vos ergo,*" &c.

art the helper of the fatherless' (Ps. ix. 14), therefore pray fervently all of you, dearest Brethren, that albeit a little earthen vessel (*laguncula testea*) has thus been broken in the valley of the sons of Adam, yet the Supreme Potter may deign to restore unto us another vessel of honour which shall be over the multitude of our generation, and shall go before us to battle like a true Maccabee. And because it is not superfluous to pray for the dead (2 Macc. xii. 44), pray for his soul to the Lord. Let every Priest say three masses, each Clerk a psalter, Laics five pater-nosters, and let all clerks say a vigil (of the dead?) in choir.—Amen.

“BROTHER ELIAS, SINNER.”

Commune damnum, sed meum singulare periculum—he was indeed in singular peril. But we may be grateful to him for this letter as a whole, and particularly for the accurate description it contains of the wounds of his Master. And this description is in close agreement with the words of Brother Thomas of Celano, written before February 1229. I will give Brother Thomas's words next, and that must suffice to inform (or remind) you

of the nature of the vision of Mount Alverna and of the wounds of Saint Francis¹:—

“Of the vision of a man having the image of a crucified Seraph.”

“While Saint Francis was in retreat at the hermitage, which from its position is called Alverna,² two years before he gave back his soul to God, he saw in a vision a certain man of God, as it were a Seraph, having six wings, standing above him with outstretched hands and joined feet fixed upon a Cross. Two of his wings were raised above his head, two were stretched out for flying, and two covered the whole of his body. And when the Blessed Servant of the Most High saw this he was filled with exceeding wonder; but he could not guess what this vision meant for him. Moreover, he rejoiced greatly, and was right

¹ *Legenda Gregorii*, that is, the Life approved by Pope Gregory IX. at Perugia on February 25, 1229, in the fifth year of his Pontificate, Part II., No. 3. Translated from Rosedale's text, Dent, 1904, *Leg. Greg.*, pp. 74-7.

² Cf. Lipsin, *Compendiosa Historia Vitæ Ser. P. Fran.*, Assisi, 1756, p. 47. “Polydorus et Virgilius *Avernam* a Verna dicunt. Erat autem Verna apud Romanos Dea Latronum . . . in cuius tutela fures esse putabantur. Templum (*Romæ*) La Verna vocabatur. Unde porta templo propinqua Lavernalis dicebatur. . . . Tempore S.F. mons ille omnino desertus erat.”

glad because of the kindly and gracious looks with which he saw that the Seraph gazed on him; and the beauty of the Seraph was beyond all reckoning. But yet he was distressed that the Seraph was fixed to the Cross, and suffered with bitter anguish. And so he rose both sad and glad, so to speak, and joy and sorrow succeeded one the other in his soul. He pondered anxiously what this vision might signify, and his spirit was much troubled to catch from the vision its sense and meaning. And when he found he could perceive nothing clearly therein with his faculties, but only the strangeness of this vision was impressed upon his heart, there began to appear in his hands and feet the marks of nails, such as a while before he had seen in the Crucified Man above him. His hands and his feet seemed to have been pierced at their middle by nails, the heads of the nails appearing on the inner side of his hands and the upper side of his feet, and the points of the nails being on the outer side of his hands and the lower side of his feet. For these marks were round on the inner side of the hands, but

on the outer side long and pointed (*oblonga*), and the carbuncles, which rose above the rest of the flesh, had the appearance of the ends of nails bent and driven back. So also in his feet the marks of the nails had been printed, and were raised above the rest of the flesh. Moreover, his right side had been pierced through as it were with a lance, and the wound was open, and often let drop blood, so that his tunic and his drawers were often sprinkled with his sacred blood. Alas! to how few was it granted to behold the sacred wound in the side while this crucified servant of the Crucified Lord yet lived! But happy Elias, to whom a glimpse of it (*utcumque illud videre*) was vouchsafed while yet the Saint lived, and not less happy Rufino who touched it with his own hands."

Then follows the account of how Brother Rufino touched the wound in his side, and how Saint Francis pushed his hand aside and "called on the Lord to spare him." We are not told how Brother Elias "somehow merited to see it."

"He hid this wound zealously from strangers, and concealed it cautiously from

his associates, so that even the Brothers ever at his side and the most devoted of his followers knew not of it for a long time . . . and lest the indiscreet zeal of man should rob him of the grace given him, he sought to hide it away in every manner he could devise."

I have given you of set purpose the baldest accounts of the Miracle of Mount Alverna which Franciscan literature contains. If you wish for meditations or elevations you cannot do better than read the Legend of Saint Bonaventure. My present purpose is not to draw out the significance of the Miracle, but to fix it in the mind as an actual event of sober history.

One more quotation and I shall have done. Its point is that it shows us Brother Leo as the source of our information concerning the Miracle of Mount Alverna.¹

"Concerning these same stigmata, Brother Leo, Companion of St. Francis, told Brother Peter, the Minister of England, that the apparition of the Seraph took place while

¹ Brother Thomas of Eccleston's *De Adventu Ff. Minorum in Angliam*, cap. xii. See Father Cuthbert's translation, "The Friars and how they came to England." London, Sands & Co., 1903, pp. 205-6.

St. Francis was in ecstasy, and that the evidence was greater even than that written in the Saint's life. Moreover, many things, he said, had been revealed to St. Francis of which he had never spoken to any living man ; but this the Saint did tell Brother Rufino, his companion, that when he saw the Angel at a distance he was exceedingly terrified, and that the Angel had treated him hardly. . . . And St. Francis commanded Brother Rufino to wash the stone upon which the Angel stood and anoint it with oil, which Brother Rufino did. These things were written down by Brother Garinus (Warren?) of Ledenfield at the dictation of Brother Leo."

But we do not leave Mount Alverna yet ; for you must first learn how the "Praise of God Most High" and the "Blessing of Brother Leo" came to be written. Here is what Brother Thomas of Celano¹ tells us about this matter :—

"When the Saint was staying in retirement in his cell on Mount Alverna, one of

¹ Rosedale, *Legenda Antiqua*, p. 33="Second Life," cap. xviii. It was written A.D. 1247.

his companions conceived a great desire to have some memorial taken from words used by the Lord written by the hand of Saint Francis and briefly annotated by him. For he believed that by this means he would be able either to escape, or at any rate to bear more easily, a grievous temptation, not of the flesh but of the spirit, with which he was troubled. Although consumed by this desire, he yet feared to make the matter known to the most Holy Father ; but what no man told the Spirit revealed to Saint Francis. For one day the Blessed Francis called him and said, 'Bring me paper and ink, for I wish to write down the words of God, and also His praises which I have been pondering in my heart.' What he asked for was straightway brought to him, and he wrote with his own hand his Praises of God and then the words which the Brother wished, and lastly a blessing for the Brother. And he said, 'Take this sheet (*cartulam*) for thyself and until the day of thy death guard it carefully.' At once all his temptation was driven away ; the letter has been kept, and since then miracles have been wrought through it."

Wadding adds some details which seem to come partly from the Fioretti, and certainly add a charm to the narrative¹:—

“Saint Francis told Brother Leo, whom alone he kept with him, to bring him bread and water once a day towards evening, and leave them at the little door of his shelter. At midnight he was to come and call him for Matins and Lauds, but was not to enter suddenly. He was to stand outside and intone the versicle, ‘*Domine labia mea aperies*’ (“Lord, open Thou my lips”) and if the second part of this versicle (“And my mouth will announce Thy praise”) were answered from within, he was to go in; but if it was not said he was to go away.

¹ Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ad annum 1224, No. VII.; “Fioretti,” Temple Classics Edition, p. 176. I omit Bartholomew of Pisa, *Liber Conformitatum*, Lib. II. 1. *Fructus XIII. in ordine*, as there is nothing of interest in his words unless it be the expression “*in quadam cedula scriptitando*.” *Cedula* is not a good word for the sheet we still possess, and Brothers Leo and Thomas both spoke of it as a *cartula*; *scriptitando* should mean that the Blessing was written more than once. I conclude that Bartholomew never saw the original.

M. Sabatier refers us to another passage in the “Conformities.” But the reference (Milan edition, 1510, 183, b 2) is inaccurate, unless he has taken “*fratri tentato imprimendo signum crucis*” to mean “by drawing the sign of the cross on paper for a tempted Friar.” Moreover, this Brother was delivered “*a carnis tentatione*.”

The Saint's devout companion observed these directions to the letter, being anxious above all to assist and obey him in all things; but often he had to go back of a stormy night, for the Saint was frequently in ecstasy and would make no answer. This zealous service of his companion the Saint repaid by delivering him from a most grievous temptation not of the flesh but of the spirit, which he dared not explain to his spiritual Father for he was overcome with shame. But while he was longing to obtain some words written out by the Saint with his own hand, by which writing he believed he would escape his affliction, or at least bear it the more easily, the holy Master learning from on high the trouble and the desire of his disciple, ordered a piece of paper and some ink to be brought, and wrote the Blessing which follows, placing before it (*præposito*) a large and mysterious Thau, or letter T."

Wadding says he saw the original in the year 1619, or we should conclude from the last words that he had never seen it. The Thau comes after, not before, the Blessing, and he quotes the Blessing inaccurately

also (*Dominus benedicat Fratrem Leonem*, instead of *F. Leo te dñs benedicat*). Nevertheless his narrative is valuable, and will serve to make clearer the circumstances in which the Blessing and the "Praise" were written.

IV

WORDS OF PRAISE—THE “LAUS DEI ALTISSIMI”

Written in gratitude for the Stigmata

AMONG the few authentic writings of Saint Francis there is one known, by name at the least, to all who know anything of the literature of his century, the “Praises of Creatures” (*Laudes Creaturarum*). It bears another name less strange to our ears, the “Canticle of the Sun” (*Cantico del Sole*); but this has been given it only because the Sun, as “the first of creatures,” is the first creature therein praised. We are not directly concerned here with this beautiful Italian poem, which has been well written of by many, and by none better than by Ozanam in his book on the Franciscan Poets. But it so happens that another poem, in Latin, which has come down to us in the very handwriting of Saint Francis, received some centuries ago the misleading title, “Praises of the Creator,” in order to distinguish it from the better-known “Praises of Creatures,” for verbal

antithesis was the literary vice of the later Middle Ages. This title is misleading because in the "Praise of God Most High," Saint Francis does not dwell with any special emphasis upon that aspect of Almighty God, which humanity sums up in the word "Creator."

His cry of praise begins, it is true, with the thought of God, as He who alone does marvellous things—the strong, the great, the most high, the almighty Father, King of Heaven and Earth, the triune God of Gods. But this is, as it were, the introduction. Throughout the rest of the Praise, the dominating thought is that of God as the sum of all perfections in Himself, and as the source and root of all approach to perfection in mankind. Saint Francis addresses the living and true God, man's highest good, in whom is summed all love and wisdom and all virtues, who is all our riches; our protector, guard, and defender, our refuge and strength, who is in this world sweetness and in the next eternal life; in a word, the loving and merciful *Saviour*. So that, if we were at pains to devise a title for it now, we should be nearest the mark in calling it the "Praise of the Merciful Saviour." However, it was

known from early days as the "Praise of the Most High," and since this title, the Most High, occurs in the Praise itself and was a favourite expression with Saint Francis, as you may see from the opening words of the "Canticle of the Sun,"¹ we cannot do better than restore it. It is possible Saint Francis himself may have headed his rough draft of the Praise, I mean the document here reproduced, with this title. But of this there is no proof.

It must be admitted that the devotion with which Brother Leo carried the document about with him on his person did some damage to it.² For if the text had not been transcribed in early times, probably soon after his death in the year 1271, it would now be impossible to recover more than some fifty words out of about 140 which were written on the original sheet.

Fortunately, an Inventory, or liturgical list of relics, was made by the Sacristans of San Francesco at Assisi about the middle of the fourteenth century, and with the aid of their transcript, which appears in that Inventory as a kind of Appendix,

¹ "Altissimo, omnipotente bono Signore."

² Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. ii., *ad annum* 1224, vii., "magno semper habuit in pretio, et nunquam a se separari permisit."

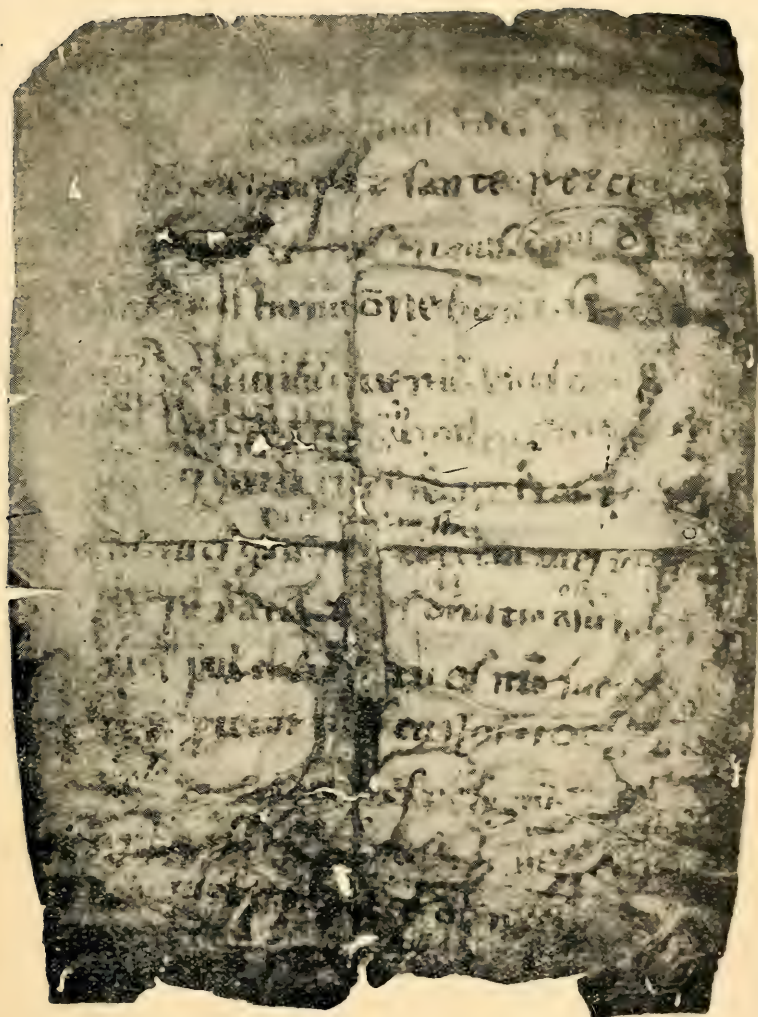
54 THE SERAPHIC KEEPSAKE

we are able to reconstruct the whole of the original Praise, with the exception of one or two words which we can supply with some confidence by conjecture. Here, then, is what St. Francis wrote in gratitude for the Miracle of the Stigmata:—

LAUS DEI ALTISSIMI

LINE

1. TU ES SANCTUS DOMINUS DEUS, TU ES
- 1A. DEUS DEORUM, SOLUS QUI FACIS MIRABILIA.
2. TU ES FORTIS, TU ES MAGNUS, TU ES ALTISSIMUS,
3. TU ES OMNIPOTENS, TU PATER SANCTE, REX COELI
ET TERRAE.
4. TU ES TRINUS ET UNUS, DOMINUS DEUS DEORUM.
5. TU ES BONUM, OMNE BONUM, SUMMUM BONUM,
6. DOMINUS DEUS VIVUS ET VERUS. TU ES AMOR,
CARITAS,
7. TU ES SAPIENTIA, TU ES HUMILITAS, TU ES
PATIENTIA,
8. TU FORTITUDO ET PRUDENTIA, TU ES SECURITAS,
TU ES QUI-
9. ES, TU ES GAUDIUM ET LETITIA. TU ES IUSTITIA
10. ET TEMPERANTIA. TU ES OMNIS DIVITIA NOSTRA
A SUFFICIEN-
11. TIA. TU ES PULCRITUDO, TU ES MANSUETUDO.
12. TU ES PROTECTOR, TU ES CUSTOS ET DEFENSOR.
13. TU ES REFUGIUM NOSTRUM ET VIRTUS. TU ES
FIDES, SPES
14. ET CARITAS NOSTRA. TU ES MAGNA DULCEDO NOSTRA.
15. TU ES VITA ETERNA NOSTRA, BONITAS INFINITA,
16. MAGNUS ET ADMIRABILIS DOMINUS DEUS OMNIPOTENS,
17. PIUS ET MISERICORS SALVATOR.



*THE PRAISE OF GOD MOST HIGH WRITTEN BY
SAINT FRANCIS ON MOUNT ALVERNA.*

PRAISE OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

LINE

1. THOU ART THE HOLY LORD GOD, THOU ART
- 1A. GOD OF GODS, WHO ALONE DOST MARVELLOUS
THINGS.
2. THOU ART STRONG, THOU ART GREAT, THOU ART
MOST HIGH.
3. THOU ART ALMIGHTY, THOU HOLY FATHER, KING
OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.
4. THOU ART THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE,
LORD GOD OF GODS.
5. THOU ART GOOD, ALL GOOD, HIGHEST GOOD,
6. LORD GOD LIVING AND TRUE. THOU ART LOVE,
CHARITY,
7. THOU ART WISDOM, THOU ART HUMILITY, THOU
ART PATIENCE,
8. THOU ART FORTITUDE AND PRUDENCE, THOU ART
SECURITY, THOU ART QUI-
9. ET, THOU ART JOY AND GLADNESS. THOU ART
JUSTICE
10. AND TEMPERANCE. THOU ART ALL OUR RICHES
AND PLENTY.
11. THOU ART BEAUTY, THOU ART GENTLENESS,
12. THOU ART THE PROTECTOR, THOU ART THE GUIDE
AND DEFENDER.
13. THOU ART OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH. THOU
ART OUR FAITH, OUR HOPE
14. AND OUR CHARITY. THOU ART GREAT SWEETNESS
TO US.
15. THOU ART OUR ETERNAL LIFE, INFINITE GOODNESS,
16. GREAT AND WONDERFUL LORD GOD ALMIGHTY,
17. LOVING AND MERCIFUL SAVIOUR.

For all its fervour, this song of spiritual praise cannot be called, in any proper sense of the word, original. The language of those "praises of the Lord which he had been pondering in his heart"¹ is conventional; we miss in it the personal note. The turn of phrase is, for the most part, taken from Holy Scripture. Perhaps we may say that Saint Francis never quite got the use of Latin as a second mother-tongue. When he wrote in the vulgar, as in the "Cantico del Sole," all his individuality drove the pen. But the restraints of grammar and syntax are fatal to freedom until they become a "second nature"; and the pen of this Troubadour of the Most High was like a horse that cannot be ridden on the curb.

Saint Francis is not satisfied with summing God's perfections in the phrase "Thou art Good, all Good, highest Good"; he proceeds to illustrate this general statement by no less than thirteen instances. Look at the passage, or rather the list of attributes, beginning "Thou art love"

¹ *Verba Domini quæ meditatus sum in corde meo.* Thomas de Celano. Vita 2da., cap. xviii.

(line 6), and ending "Thou art justice and temperance" (line 10). Each of the qualities named in these lines is set forth as belonging to God as He is in Himself, and apart from His relation to us. It is a list of the *absolute* aspects of God; and it is followed by an enumeration (or choice, for it is not exhaustive) of the aspects of Almighty God in His relation to man, beginning "Thou art all our riches" (line 10), and ending "Thou art our eternal life" (line 15).

A comparison of these two passages, or lists of attributes absolute and relative, will serve to explain what might be regarded as a certain carelessness of composition. For "charity" is twice mentioned as an attribute of God. In the light of the analysis of the subject which I have given, it will be seen at once that Saint Francis, in the first passage where "charity" is mentioned (line 6), is viewing God as He is in Himself, and does not therefore speak of Him as Faith or as Hope. Faith has no place in the perfection of God; Hope cannot exist save in a condition of imperfection; but God "is" Love. In the

second passage (line 14) God is viewed as He appears to mankind, not as He is in Himself, and Saint Francis says, quite correctly, "Thou art *our* Faith, *our* Hope, *our* Charity." For Almighty God is the source of these virtues, and even the poor measure in which Man attains them is a manifestation of Him.

We have here an instance of that instinct, common to all the saints, and infallible in the greatest of them, which supplies the place of deep theological knowledge where that is lacking. Their knowledge of God is infused, not acquired; and they make no mistakes, as the best of theologians on occasion may. It is their close communion with the God of Truth that enables them to think and speak correctly concerning Him.

We need not feel any regrets that in the "Praise of the Most High God," no direct allusion is made to the miraculous favour that had been conferred upon Saint Francis. Throughout the last two years of his life he was very sensitive about the Holy Stigmata, and resented any manifestation of curiosity about them, however well-intentioned. Nor,

apart from this, could we reasonably have expected him to express, save in the conventional terms poor humanity uses in relation to Almighty God, his inexpressible gratitude.

I shall not deal with these Words of Praise after the fashion of the modern expert in handwriting. Something will be said presently in my story of the Assisi Relic upon that side of the matter; and a moment's reflection will show that, given the identity of Brother Leo's notes to the Autograph Blessing, we must also admit the "Praise" to have been written by the hand that bore the print of Christ's Holy Nail.

I would rather leave the Praise to "Your Pieties" with a word or two concerning what it tells us of the mind of Saint Francis. The first point is the simplicity with which Saint Francis, eager to express his gratitude for the wonderful "favour" he had received upon Mount Alverna, bethought him to compose some lines in praise of the Most High God. In this cry of gratitude and love he set forth in the terms most familiar to him, the terms

of Holy Scripture, those attributes of God which were most present to his mind after the impression of the Stigmata. It is to Almighty God, "who alone doth marvellous things," that he addresses himself. And the simplicity, the charming freshness is to be seen not so much in what he wrote as in his desire to write at all. He wrote because he could not rest until he had put upon paper the words of praise to God with which his heart was full (*verba Domini quæ meditatus sum in corde meo*). It is no mere fancy to see in this one more instance of that spirit of the Troubadour which his modern biographers delight to note in him. For the Troubadours wandered through the world in search of whatever might move them to admiration, and it was their vocation to give fine expression to every enthusiasm they felt. So Saint Francis, God's Troubadour. His poems, his prayers, even his Rules, are simply the Troubadour's expression of his high thoughts. And when he received from Our Lord Our Lord's own Wounds he could not be content with the prayer of gratitude, he must take pen and paper and write his song of praise.

Next to the simple freshness of this Troubadour of the Most High God, we must note the reserve of the mystic. *Secretum meum mihi*—"something sealed the lips of that Evangelist." He had seen and heard things which he felt it a duty to veil from the scoffs of the sceptic who is ever with us, and not less from the indiscreet zeal of the faithful, of which he certainly had some experience. I need not enter on the question whether or no he revealed during what remained to him of painful life the words spoken to him by the Seraph—the *allocutio Seraphym*; nor whether we may accept as genuine the revelation of those words he is said to have made after his death in a vision accorded to a certain holy friar.¹ It is enough for us at present to remark that even when he wrote down what his heart felt for the private use of his most intimate companion he was careful to keep his secret to himself.

NOTE ON THE VERSIONS OF THE LAUS

The version here given of the "Praise" differs considerably from that of Mgr. Faloci Pulignani. To his articles in the *Miscellanea Franciscana* I owe my knowledge of the

¹ "Fioretti," Temple Classics edition, pp. 217-221.

readings of two important MSS., one the "liturgical" Inventory of Relics in the Basilica at Assisi ("MS. ASS." No. 344, f. 78.b.), which dates, as I have said, from the middle of the fourteenth century (c. 1348); and the other, a MS. of the fifteenth century, on paper, which I will quote as MS. FOL. This latter MS. became the property of the Capuchin house, San Severino, at Spello, in the year 1712, but in 1882 it belonged to the Capuchins of Foligno. At the end of 1897 it appears to have been sent to the Capuchins of Assisi and lost in transit. (*Spec. Perf.*, ed. Sabatier, p. ccvii.) The "Praise" is at page 24.

I am also indebted to Mgr. Faloci Pulignani's researches for the following Italian version, taken from a Chronicle made by an Umbrian friar of the fifteenth century. This Chronicle, sometimes referred to as *Franceschina*, bears the title *Specchio dell' ordine minore*. There are two MSS. of it at Perugia, but this version is taken from the MS. at Santa Maria degli Angeli (Porziuncola, codex c. 212). Although its date and the fact that it is a translation make it inferior in authority to the Assisi MS., the Foligno-Spello MS., or the Eton College MS., from which I take the variants in Bartholomew of Pisa's "Conformities," I give it in full, because it seems to me to have a beauty of its own:—

Oratione devota di Santo Francesco.

1. Tu se santo signore mio dio. Tu se
- 1a. dio deli dij. Elquale solo faj cose meravegliose.
2. Tu se forte, Tu se grande, Tu se altissimo,
3. Tu se onnipotente, Tu se lo padre sancto. Tu se Re deli celi et dela terra.
4. Tu se eterno dio deli dij.
5. Tu se omne bene.
6. Tu se lo signore dio vivo et vero. Tu se amore de carita.
7. Tu se sapientia. Tu se humilita.
8. Tu se bellezza. Tu se securita. Tu se quillo che
9. se. Tu se gaudio. Tu se speranza nostra. Tu se letitia nostra. Tu se justitia
10. et temperanza. Tu se fortezza et prudentia. Tu se omne nostra divitia a sufficientia.

11. Tu se mansuetudine.
12. Tu se protettore, custodia, et guardia nostra. Tu se defensore nostro.
13. Tu se nostro refugio et virtu. Tu se fede, speranza,
14. et carita nostra. Tu se grande nostra dolceza.
15. Tu se bonta infinita.
16. Grande et amirabile dio pretioso et omnipotente,
17. misericordia et salvatore nostro. Amen.

The variants marked "*Bart*" are taken from a MS. in the Library of Eton College. (Vellum. Written in Italy, fifteenth century. "Iste liber competit loco Sancti Apollonii extra Brixiam (Brescia).") The "*Laus*" is given in Book 2 (*Fructus* 11. *Conformitas* 23 *in ordine*).

In the notes "*Firm.*" stands for the "*Speculum Minorum seu Firmamentum Trium Ordinum*"; "*Wad.*" for the *Opuscula S.F.* printed in 1623. It is worth noting that Wadding says he made a careful examination of the original. (*Fran. caractere scripta asservatur in Conventu divi Fran. Assis. Eam ipse vidi anno 1619 diligentiusque observavi.*) His comments on the document are theological in kind, and are not of much value for present purposes; but his version of the "*Laus*" would be of great authority owing to his "very diligent observation" of the original, if it were not for his mania for correcting style. With the aid of my critical text, printed at the back of the reproduction of the MS., I hope that these notes of readings may be easily intelligible.

Title. "*Laus Domini Dei Altissimi.*"—MS. FOL., *Wad.* "*Laus dni. Dei alt. quam composuit B. Franciscus.*"—*Bart.*, *Firm.* "*Oratione devota di. s. Fran.*"—*Specchio.* No title (?).—MS. ASS.

Line 1. Nothing *legible*. Tu es s. dns. Deus solus qui facis mir.—MS. ASS. tu es s. dns. Deus, tu es Deus deorum qui solus.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*

Line 2. es magnus, tu es . . . *legible*. No variants.

Line 3. . . . tens pater sancte rex ce . . . *legible*. Tu es rex omn.—MS. ASS. Tu omn.—MS. FOL. Tu es omn.—om. *Firm.* Tu es pater sanctus.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio.*

Line 4. trinus et unus dominus deus . . . *legible*. dns. deus, omne bonum.—MS. ASS. trinus et unus Deus Deorum.—MS. FOL., *Bart.* trinus et unus Deus.—*Firm.*, *Wad.*

Line 5. Tu es bonum, omne bonum, summum . . . *legible*. tu es bonum.—MS. ASS., *Wad.* tu es bonus.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*

Line 6. Deus vivus (unicus?) . . . verus . . . es amor car . . . *legible*. vivus et verus.—MS. FOL., *Specchio*. unicus et verus.—MS. ASS. unus et v.—*Firm.*, *Wad.* nimis et v.—*Bart.* amor, caritas.—MSS. ASS. FOL., *Bart.* amor et car.—*Firm.*, *Wad.* "amore de carita."—*Specchio*.

Line 7. humilitas tu . . . *legible*. tu es hum. tu es pat. tu es sec.—MS. ASS. tu es hum. tu pat.—MS. FOL. tu hum. tu es pat. tu es pulc.—*Bart.*, *Wad.* tu es hum. tu es pat. tu es pulc.—*Firm.* "tu se humilita. tu se bellezza."—*Specchio*.

Line 8. . . . tia tu es securitas . . . *legible*. tu pulcrido.—MS. FOL. tu es pulc.—*Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Specchio*. . . . tu es sec.—MS. ASS. tu fortitudo et prudentia.—Restored from MS. FOL, see notes to 10.

Line 9. . . . tu es gaud . . . letitia tu es ius . . . *legible*. (tu es quie) tas, tu es gaudium et letitia nostra.—MS. ASS. (tu es qui) es, gaudium, tu es spes nostra et letitia.—MS. FOL. (tu es qui) es, tu es gaud., tu es spes nostra et let.—*Bart.*, *Wad.*, *Firm.* "tu se quillo che se."—*Specchio*. tu es qui es.—*Bart.*, ed. 1510.

Line 10. . . . temperantia . . . is divitia nostra a suf . . . *legible*. temperantia, tu fortitudo et prudentia.—MS. FOL. tu temp. tu es fort. et prud.—*Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*. temp. tu es omnia divitia nostra et suf.—MS. ASS. tu es omnis divitia nostra ad.—MS. FOL. omnes divitiæ nostræ ad.—*Bart.* omnes divitiæ ad.—*Firm.*, *Wad.* "omne nostra divitia a sufficientia."—*Specchio*.

Line 11. . . . pulcr. . . . tu es mansuetudo . . . *legible*. et sufficientia.—MS. ASS. ad sufficientiam.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.* ad sufficiens.—*Wad.* tu es plenitudo.—MS. ASS., om. MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*. tu mans.—MS. FOL. tu es mans.—MS. ASS., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*.

Line 12. protector, tu es custos et def . . . *legible*. No variants.

Line 13. refugium (*or* refrigerium?) . . . *legible*. tu es refrigerium, tu es spes.—MS. ASS. tu es refugium nostrum et virtus.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*. tu es spes nostra, tu es fides nostra.—MS. ASS. tu es fides, spes.—MS. FOL. *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*.

Line 14. Nothing *legible*. et caritas nostra. — om. MS. ASS. et caritas nostra.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*

Line 15. Nothing *legible*. dulcedo nostra, tu es bonitas infinita.—MS. FOL., *Bart.*, *Firm.*, *Wad.*, *Specchio*. dulcedo nostra tu es vita eterna nostra.—MS. ASS.

Line 16. Nothing *legible*. magnus et adm. dns. Deus omn.—MS. ASS., *Bart.*, *Wad.* dns Deus meus omn.—*Firm.* mirabilis.—MS. FOL.

Line 17. Nothing *legible*. dns. Deus omn. misericors salvator.—MS. ASS. omn. pius et miser. et salv.—MS. FOL. omn. pius miser. et salv.—*Bart.* omn. pius et miser. salv.—*Firm.*, *Wad.*

V

WORDS OF BLESSING—BROTHER LEO'S TALISMAN

IT will be well worth our while to examine with some minuteness the document known as the Autograph Blessing, since it contains, though only in parenthesis, one of the earliest accounts of the great mystical miracle—the impression on the body of Saint Francis of the wounds of our Lord.

We will begin at the beginning with the first note written in the handwriting of Brother Leo.

(I.) *Beatus Franciscus
duobus annis ante mortem
suam fecit quadrages- (2)
imam in loco Alvernae ad
honorem beatae Virginis
Mariae, Matris Dei, et beati
(3) Michaelis archangeli, a
festo Assumptionis Sanctae
Mariae Virginis usque ad
festum Sancti (4) Michaelis*

(I.) The Blessed Francis,
two years before his death,
kept a Lent in the hermit-
age of the Alverna in hon-
our of the Blessed Virgin
Mary, Mother of God, and
Blessed Michael the Arch-
angel from the Feast of the
Assumption of Saint Mary
the Virgin to the Feast of

Septembre. Et facta est
super eum manus Domini.
Post visionem et allocut-
(5) ionem seraphym et
impressionem stigmatum
Christi in corpore suo
fecit has laudes ex alio (6)
latere cartulae scriptas et
manu sua scripsit gratias
agens Deo de beneficio
sibi (7) collato.

Saint Michael in Septem-
ber. And the hand of the
Lord was laid upon him.
After the vision and speech
he had of a seraph, and the
impression in his body of
the Stigmata of Christ, he
made these Praises which
are written on the other
side of the sheet, and with
his own hand he wrote
them out, giving thanks to
God for the favour that
had been conferred on
him.

Such is the first portion of the document. It is of the utmost importance, because it is the only account by an intimate companion of Saint Francis of the great miracle which took place on Mount Alverna about the time of the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross (*circa festum exaltationis S. Crucis*, S. Bonaventure) in the year 1224. The description of that miracle which Brother Leo has left us in ten carefully chosen words is a marvel of accuracy and conciseness. All the ancient accounts tell us, first of the vision of the Seraph, then of certain words which the Man Crucified within the Seraph's wings addressed to Saint Francis, and the

purport of which he never revealed during his lifetime, then of the impression of the Stigmata—"visio et allocutio Seraphym, et impressio Stigmatum Christi in corpore suo," writes Brother Leo. And we have it direct from him ; for the whole of this note is, like others which will be discussed later, written in his own handwriting.

In the fourth line from the top you will be able to distinguish the letters "p't." It is a matter of dispute whether these letters represent *post* ("after"), or *propter* ("because of"), or whether they are not rather "p'r" and represent *per*, "by means of."¹ To take these

¹ *Post*—R. P. Edouard d'Alençon, Archivist General of the Capuchins, in *Annales Franciscaines*, 35th year, July, 1896, Paris, and *La Benediction de St. François*, Mersch. Paris, 1896 ; *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Series 16, vol. v., 1896, p. 723 ; P. Abb. G. Cozza-Luzzi in *La Palestra del Clero*, vol. xli., p. 10, Rome, January 1898. *Propter*—Mgr. Faloci Pulignani in *Miscellanea Franciscana*, vol. vi. pp. 32-9, Foligno, 1895 ; and *Tre Autografi di San Fran.*, Porziuncola, 1896 ; Mr. Montgomery Carmichael, "A New Light on the Benediction of St. F." in "St. Peter's," London, Feb. 1900. *Per*—M. Paul Sabatier in *Vie de St. F.*, 20th ed., pp. xliii., 405 ; and in *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. lxviii.

To make the modern bibliography of the subject complete, I need only mention the controversy and its favourable decision by three leading German palæographers in the Leipzig *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1895, pp. 404, 627 ; and the favourable verdict of M. S. Berger, *Bulletin Critique* of March 5, 1896, "Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France."

readings in the inverse order of their probability, the reading *per* may be rejected on three grounds. This word is never abbreviated by writing "p'r"; the letters are much more like "p't" than "p'r"; and this reading would not make good sense. For the scriptural expression "The hand of the Lord was put upon him" undoubtedly refers to the impression of the Stigmata upon Saint Francis. It would be at least a curious and involved expression, if Brother Leo had written "The Stigmata were given to him by means of (the vision and speech he had of a seraph and) the impression of the Stigmata."

Per, then, cannot be the right word. What about *propter*? This reading has the support of the learned Conventual Father, Mgr. Faloci Pulignani, who has done more than any man to throw light upon the three autograph documents bequeathed by Saint Francis to posterity. Yet the word *propter*, whenever it is abbreviated, is written with two "p's," the first having a curved line across its tail to denote "*pro*," the first syllable. It so happens that there are two instances of

this abbreviation in the Letter to Brother Leo (ll. 7 and 17) and in each instance the word is written "p^t," with a line over the "t" and a curve across the tail of the first "p." As to the sense, we cannot suppose Brother Leo to have written "The Stigmata were given to him on account of (the vision and speech he had of a Seraph and) the impression of the Stigmata." On the other hand, if the word in dispute stands, as I think it does, at the beginning of a sentence, *propter* would make nearly as good sense as the true reading *post*. Reading *propter* the sentence would mean that the "Praises on the other side of the sheet" were written "on account of" the vision of the Seraph and the impression of the Stigmata.

The reading *post*, which corresponds more closely than any other with the letters "p^t," would not make sense unless it were at the beginning of the sentence. Brother Leo could not have written "the hand of the Lord was put upon him after the vision and the impression of the Stigmata." But if the word in dispute begins a new sentence, we have the simple statement that

“after the vision and the impression of the Stigmata, Saint Francis wrote with his own hand the Praises on the other side of the sheet.”

Perhaps these very technical details will be pardoned when it is realised that, *post* (“after”) being the true reading, we have positive evidence that the “Praise of the Most High God,” and probably also the Blessing, were written by Saint Francis, after—not before—he received the Stigmata. It is surely an advance that this should be established by the actual words of Brother Leo, not merely by inference from the indefinite expression which tells us that the “Praises” were written “in gratitude for the favour conferred” on Saint Francis. Mr. Carmichael, who is at some pains to prove that the Blessing was written after the Miracle, maintains, and quite rightly maintains, that the words “giving thanks to God for the favour conferred on him” (*de beneficio*, not *de beneficiis*) must refer to the miraculous favour of the Stigmata. But he bases his proof only on this interpretation of a vague expression, not noticing that, even with the reading *propter*,

the last sentence implies that the "Praises" were written in gratitude for the Miracle. It is true the Fioretti speak of the Blessing as given before the Miracle, but, for all its beauty, it is not a reliable authority and cannot prevail against Brother Leo's words. There is nothing in the "Praise" itself (unless it be the expression "who alone dost marvellous things," which is quite indefinite) to show that it was written in gratitude for the miracle of the Stigmata; and the word "favour" might, of course, refer to any other spiritual consolation experienced by Saint Francis on Mount Alverna. But we now have Brother Leo's word for it—the "Praise of the Most High God" (and probably also the Blessing), was written by a hand that already bore the print of the nail. This cannot but deepen our veneration for the little piece of paper preserved at Assisi, containing, as it does, not only an account by one who was there of what happened on Mount Alverna, but also the Saint's own expression of gratitude to God for the sublime agony that he had suffered.

There is only one other small point to

notice about this first of Brother Leo's notes. I translate "*locus Alvernæ*," "the hermitage of the Alverna," because "*locus*" in Franciscan documents is a technical term for the hermitages or solitary places (*eremitoria*), to which, as we learn from the now famous letter written by Jacques de Vitry in 1216, the first Friars, and Saint Francis himself, retired from time to time for rest and contemplation after their missionary labours.

The second paragraph is as follows:—

(II.) Benedicat tibi	(II.) The Lord bless thee
Dominus et custodiat te—	and guard thee—Show His
ostendat faciem suam tibi et	face to thee and have
misereatur tui—convertat	mercy on thee—Turn His
vultum suum ad te et det	face towards thee and give
tibi pacem.	thee peace.

The point to notice about this Blessing is that it was written by Saint Francis himself with his own hand (*manu sua*), and in answer to a request made by Brother Leo. What he asked for was "some memorable passage from the words of God"—*cupiebat habere de verbis domini memorabile scriptum manu S. Francisci*.¹ It was not merely a

¹ Thomas de Celano, "Second Life," Second Part, chap. xviii. Mr. Carmichael has pointed out that "something

personal blessing for which he asked; he wished Saint Francis to bless him in writing with a form of words used by Almighty God.

We learn from the account given by Brother Thomas (A.D. 1247) which I have translated elsewhere that Saint Francis wrote down "the words which the Brother (*i.e.* Leo) wished"; for this is the natural sense of the words (*verba quae voluit*), not "the words which he desired to write," as others have understood them. This appears to imply that Brother Leo had actually asked for the blessing which begins with the words, "The Lord bless thee and guard thee . . ." Whether Leo specified the "memorable passage from the words of God" or not, his request for a blessing used, or prescribed to be used, by Almighty God was granted; for the Blessing comes

from the words of God" necessarily means "something from the Scriptures"; yet, if no more than this had been meant, Thomas de Celano would surely have written "*de Verbo Domini*." Père Edouard takes the words to mean "a summary of the words which the Lord had spoken" to Saint Francis. This is more than Celano's words can bear, and does not fit the actual words employed by Saint Francis in answer to Brother Leo's request. Our Lord, appearing between the wings of the Seraph, cannot have said "*Benedicat tibi Dominus*," &c.

from the Book of Numbers (vi. 22-26) where Almighty God bids Moses tell Aaron to bless the children of Israel and their sons with those words.

A study of the Prologue to Brother Thomas's "Second Life" and of the "Prayer of the Saint's Companions" at the end of it shows clearly that it was written with the actual assistance of Brother Leo and other intimate companions of Saint Francis. Indeed, the modern Bollandists, than whom there is no higher authority, hold that the real Legend of the Three Companions is none other than Celano's "Second Life," the compilation so called dating from the very end of the thirteenth century. However this may be, Brother Thomas's "Second Life" is the source of most of our reliable information about Saint Francis; and we may conclude that a legend written with the help of Brother Leo would give in substance his own account of any events personally concerning him.

So much for Brother Thomas's account of the writing of Blessing. I will not dwell upon the corresponding passage in Saint

Bonaventure's "Legend," which is obviously borrowed from the passage elsewhere translated; but it is worth noting that he uses the words "*de verbis Domini aliquod scriptum*"—"something from the words of God written"; and that he mentions, not three writings, like Brother Thomas, but two only—*laudes Domini et ultimo benedictionem ipsius*.

When we compare these accounts of the Blessing with the Blessing itself there is, I think, only one difficulty. What is the meaning of the "brief notes" which Brother Leo wished the Holy Father to add to those "words of the Lord" he asked him to write out on the paper? As we read the document, we find only on the one side the "Praise of the Most High God," and on the other the quotation from the Book of Numbers. Can it be that the short "personal" blessing addressed directly to Brother Leo is the "brief note" to which the earliest account refers?

But before we come to the personal blessing, we must set forth the third paragraph of the document:—

(III.) Beatus Franciscus scripsit manu sua istam benedictionem mihi fratri Leoni.	(III.) The Blessed Francis wrote with his own hand this blessing for me, Brother Leo.
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This, like the first paragraph, is written in the handwriting of Brother Leo, and thus gives us a “moral certainty” that the Blessing, with its quotation from the Book of Numbers, was written by Saint Francis. The expression *istam benedictionem* may of course mean either “the above blessing” or “the following blessing,” for, as we shall see, Saint Francis added, immediately below, a second Blessing for his friend in the form of a short comment on the first. I think Brother Leo speaks of these two Blessings as one, and that this explains why he does not mention the Blessing addressed to him by name when he comes to authenticate the drawing and the figure “T” made by his Master. So that in this note (III.) Brother Leo tells us that the whole of the Blessing, the quotation from Numbers, and also its application to himself, were written by Saint Francis.

The personal Blessing, or “brief note,” is as follows :—

(IV.) Frater Leo, te dominus benedicat.	(IV.) Brother Leo, the Lord bless thee.
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These words, as you may see from the facsimile, are awkwardly disposed on either side of the "large and mysterious Thau, or letter T," as it has been described.¹ The words are so badly divided that, according to one writer, the small drawing must have been made before the words were written. "It is natural," says the writer in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, "to see in this the effect of good Brother Leo's importunity ; having had the blessing he desired sealed with the mystic sign, he turned nevertheless to ask the Saint to add to it this particular direction to his own person, and had his request granted at the cost of all symmetry in the document." This is a reasonable explanation of the awkward manner in which the words are set out ; but it is certainly not accidental that the Brother's name is disposed on either side of the shaft of the "T." It seems to me more probable that when Saint Francis drew the "Thau" he wrote Leo's name in two syllables on

¹ Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ad ann. 1224, No. vii.

either side of it, making his “Thau,” which had other meanings besides, serve also for a cross of Blessing; and that this purpose of the “T” needing further explanation, because the “T” itself is not quite a true Cross, the words *te dñs benedicat* were added later.

We are now arrived at the simple statement about which there has been so much written, I mean the words of Brother Leo which forbid us to see anything else in the crude drawing above them but an attempt to represent a human head:—

(V.) Simili modo fecit
istud signum thau cum
capite manu sua.

(V.) In the same way, he
made the above signature,
T, together with the head,
with his own hand.

If Saint Francis had meant to draw a Cross, would not Brother Leo have called it the *signum Crucis* instead of the *signum thau*? If Saint Francis had meant to draw a skull, would he not have written *cum cranio* instead of *cum capite*? And if the drawing were meant for an outline of Mount Calvary, or even of Mount Alverna, would not this have been mentioned?

There is yet another theory, which I will examine first. I have heard the words *thau cum capite*, "T with a head," translated "a capital T"; but attractive as this solution would be, enabling us to regard the drawing as a mere accident or as something scribbled on the "cartula" before Saint Francis used it, I can find no instance of A or B *cum capite* meaning capital A, capital B. It may be answered that while *cum capite* is not a technical term denoting a capital letter, it may still have been used to describe the capital form of the letter T, this letter being the only one in the alphabet which has added to it something in the nature of a *head* or top when used as a capital letter. But you must first prove that in Italian writing of the thirteenth century the small "t" has no *head* or cross to it; and this none who have read MSS. of that period will be prepared to maintain. The words *cum capite* must, then, mean "with a head"; and it follows that the strange drawing which has shocked so many devout persons must be an attempt made by Saint Francis, *manu sua*, to represent a head, presumably a human head. Shock-

ing it may be to some; but for my part I feel more than ever drawn to the Saint who could draw so ill. The Father Sacristan at San Francesco told me he could discern eyes, nose, and mouth in the drawing; there was surely more of faith than sight in the good Father's intuitions. Something faintly resembling eyelashes does indeed appear in the middle of the drawing, but the rest has no human character at all.

And now, having decided to take the words of Brother Leo's note in their simple and obvious sense, we naturally turn to the earliest legends of Saint Francis in the hope of finding a clue to the significance of a "T" and of a human head in connection with it. The earliest authority of all is disappointing in this matter; Thomas de Celano's First Life, or *Legenda Gregorii*, written in the year 1228-1229, roughly two years after the death of Saint Francis, contains no reference, so far as I am aware, to the "sign thau," of which we read no less than three times in the Legend of Saint Bonaventure, written some thirty years later. There is, however, one mention of this

mystic symbol in Franciscan literature earlier than Saint Bonaventure, and this I proceed to give. It occurs in what was known until recently as Thomas de Celano's "Second Life," which we are now to call the *Legenda Antiqua*.¹ It was written probably between 1247 and 1250:—

Gaudens societate beati patris frater Pacificus, sentire incipit quas nondum senserat unctiones. Iterato namque videre permittitur quod aliis velabatur; aspexit enim post pauca magnum signum thau super frontem beati Francisci, quod diversicoloribus circulis pavonis pulchritudinem praeferbat.

Rejoicing in his companionship with the Blessed Father, Brother Peaceful began to feel spiritual unguents which he had not yet felt. For he was permitted frequently to see what was veiled from others. For, soon after, he beheld a large sign "T" upon the forehead of the Blessed Francis, which with its varicoloured circles presented the beautiful appearance of the "eyes" of a peacock's tail.

¹ See "Saint Francis of Assisi, according to Brother Thomas of Celano. His Descriptions of the Seraphic Father, A.D. 1229-1257," Rev. H. G. Rosedale (London, Dent, 1904); *Legenda Antiqua*, p. 56. Mr. Rosedale omits all acknowledgment of the previous edition of the *Miracula*, published by the Bollandists in 1899 (vol. xviii.). Was he merely wasting his time when he made a fresh transcript of the Boncampagni MS.?

A year or two after the completion of the *Legenda Antiqua*, from which we have just quoted, Brother Thomas compiled at the request of Brother Crescentius, the Minister General, a "Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis." It is a substantial piece of work, more so than its title would lead one to expect; and it has only recently come to light. Here is the reference which Brother Thomas makes in his third work¹ to the vision of Brother Peaceful:—

Nam et vir ille Domini Pacificus, inspector cœlestium visionum, magnum signum thau carneis oculis super frontem beati patris inspexit, quod varie depictum fulgore aureo renitebat.

Moreover, that Man of God, Brother Peaceful, seer of heavenly visions, saw with his bodily eyes a large sign "T" upon the forehead of the Blessed Father, which was decked out with various colours, and shone with a golden radiance.

Nearly every fact related in Saint Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior* may be traced by the student to one or other of Brother Thomas's "Lives." Nearly always he altered for the worse what he borrowed—I mean

¹ *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xviii., 1899, p. 115. Rose-dale, *Miracula*, p. 110.

“worse” from our point of view only, for he had a more polished style, if he cared less for the vivid detail. Having two versions of the story to choose from, it is not surprising that he should have borrowed from the later, and thus banished the peacock, who struts with such grace and charm across Brother Thomas’s earlier page. True as always to the epitaph made upon a much later artist, “*nihil tetigit quod non ornavit*,” Saint Bonaventure tells us that it was the face of Saint Francis that was rendered beautiful by the colours of the “sign thau,” whereas Brother Thomas evidently meant only that the “T” itself was resplendent with “eyes” like a peacock’s tail. However, we must not quarrel with Saint Bonaventure, who had all the merits besides all the faults of an official biographer. Here is what he makes of Brother Peaceful’s visions¹:—

Hic (Fratr Pacificus)	This Brother Peaceful
postmodum in omni sanc-	afterwards made progress
titate proficiens, antequam	in every kind of holiness,
fieret minister in Francia	and before he was made

¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, October, vol. ii. ; *Vita Altera*, cap. li. The passage is literally transcribed by Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ad annum 1212, xl.

(siquidem primus ibidem ministerii gessit officium) meruit iterato magnum Thau in fronte Francisci videre, quod colorum varietate distinctum faciem ipsius miro venustabat ornatu.

Minister in France (he was, of course, the first to hold the office of Minister there) had grace to see again and again a large "T" on the forehead of Francis, which, as it was picked out in various colours, adorned his face with a marvellous beauty.

So far, then, we have learnt from the early sources only that the sign "T" was seen upon the forehead of Saint Francis "again and again" by one Brother Peaceful. And who, it will be asked, was Brother Peaceful? "There lived in the March of Ancona a certain secular person, forgetful of himself and ignorant of God, who had abandoned himself wholly to vanity; he was given the name of the King of Verses, because he was the prince of them that sang lewd songs and a teller of worldly tales; in a word, to such a height had the glory of the world uplifted this man that he had been crowned with great pomp by the Emperor. By Divine Providence he and the blessed Francis met each other at a certain Monastery of enclosed 'Poor Ladies'; the Blessed Father had come thither with

his companions to see his daughters; he had come with many of his friends to see a cousin of his. And the hand of God was laid upon him, and he saw with his bodily eyes Saint Francis having on him a sign after the fashion of a Cross, made of two swords set cross-wise that shined mightily; one stretched from his head to his feet, and the other cross-wise from hand to hand past his breast." And then Saint Francis preached, and "he answered forthwith, 'What need is there to string more words together? Let us come to deeds. Take me away from among men and give me back to the Great Emperor.' And on the following day the Saint clothed him and, having led him back to the peace of the Lord, named him Brother Peaceful."¹

The story is charming, you will say, but what has it to do with the present subject? Nothing, I admit, unless I may be allowed to conjecture that from this vision of the King of Verses dates the habit Saint Francis acquired of signing his letters with a capital "T." And this habit is the next thing we

¹ Rosedale. *Tractatus Secundus*, lxxxvii., p. 55; and *Legenda Antiqua*, M. iv., p. 58.

have to notice about the "sign thau" in connection with Saint Francis.

Familiare sibi signum thau prae ceteris signis, quo solo et missivas cartulas consignabat et cellarum parietes ubilibet depingebat.¹

The use of the signature "T" was habitual with him above all other signatures. With this alone he used to write his signature to letters for despatch, and would paint the walls of the cells with it wherever he might be.

The official biographer, Saint Bonaventure, has a passage to the same effect, which he has probably borrowed from Brother Thomas's treatise on the Miracles.

Hoc signo Sanctus Franciscus suas consignabat litteras quoties caritatis causa scriptum aliquod dirigebat.²

With this signature Saint Francis used to sign his letters as often as holy charity led him to dictate any written message.

These two quotations are sufficient by themselves to show (1) that Saint Francis usually, if not always (*quo solo*), employed "T" for his signature, and (2) that he had a devotion (as we say) to this symbol, for no less can be implied by his painting it

¹ Rosedale. *Miracula*, c. ii., p. 110; *Anal. Boll.*, xviii. p. 115. This passage immediately precedes the account of Brother Peaceful's vision of the "T" already quoted.

² *Acta Sanctorum. Vita Altera*, cap. 308.

on the walls of the cells in which he slept on his missionary wanderings.

But as yet we are no clearer as to the significance of this sign or signature, unless we are to suppose that Brother Peaceful's visions made so profound an impression on him that he would have all his Brethren and all his correspondents remember them. I cannot think that Saint Francis would have made so much of these visions, unless he had seen in them some special significance lost now to us ; yet not quite lost, as the following passage will show :—

Hoc quippe signum vir sanctus magno venerabatur affectu, frequenti commendabit eloquio, et in eis, quas dirigebat, litterulis manu propria subscribebat; tanquam si omne ipsius studium foret signare Thau, iuxta dictum propheticum, super frontes virorum gentium et dolentium, ad Christum Iesum veraciter conversorum.¹

Now the Saint venerated this sign (thau) with great devotion, often spoke its praises, and used it for his signature which he wrote with his own hand at the foot of the notes which he dictated ; just as if his one mission were to mark Thau according to the saying of the Prophet, upon the foreheads of men that sigh and mourn, men truly converted to Christ Jesus.

¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, October, vol. ii. *Vita Altera*, cap. li. Wadding, *ad annum* 1212, xl. ; this passage immediately follows the account of Brother Peaceful's vision already quoted.

The "saying of the Prophet" referred to is that of Ezekiel (Douay Version, ix. 4): "The Lord said to him: Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem: and mark Thau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and mourn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof." And the note of the Douay editors informs us that "Thau or Tau is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and signifies 'a sign' or 'a mark'. . . . Saint Jerome and other interpreters conclude it was the form of the letter Thau, which, in the ancient Hebrew character, was the form of a cross."

Saint Bonaventure's words clearly imply that Saint Francis had a Secretary, to whom he dictated notes (*litterulae*). For the signature of a letter at its foot (*subscribat*) by the person from whom it purports to come must mean that the letter has been written by some one else, either as a draft for approval, or at dictation (*dirigebat*). M. Sabatier, who has dealt at length with the relations between Saint Francis and Brother Leo, and has suggested that the latter acted as secretary, has not used this passage in

support of his view. But this is another matter.

The passage last quoted does not only confirm what we had already learnt from other sources as to the use by Saint Francis of the "sign thau" for his signature. It tells us further that Saint Francis had a great devotion (*magnus affectus*) to this symbol, and that he often talked about it. And, most important of all, it tells us that this devotion to the symbol, this use of it for his signature, were suggested by a passage in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel. Now it must be by this time evident to all that the "T" we find drawn at the foot of the Blessing (*subscribat*) which Saint Francis gave to Brother Leo on Mount Alverna is an instance, the only extant instance unfortunately, of the Saint's usual signature. The bottom of the parchment on which Saint Francis wrote his Letter to Brother Leo has been worn or torn away, or perhaps we should find it there. In any case the "T" of the autograph Blessing is primarily a monogram or "mark." He was quite capable of writing his name in full, and might

naturally have signed his Blessing with an "F." Why, then, did he use "T"? Leaving on one side the visions of Brother Peaceful, we get our answer from Saint Bonaventure and from the prophecy of Ezekiel to which he refers. He had a mission, a passion almost (*studium*), for marking this symbol upon the foreheads of true penitents, men who sighed and "mourned for all the abominations that were committed *in the midst of Jerusalem*" —and that means in the Church of God.

Remember that Saint Francis loved nothing better than to take some command or even some "precept" out of its context in Holy Scripture, interpret it in the most literal, which is as much as to say the most Catholic, sense possible, and regard it henceforth as binding on himself if not also on all his true followers. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matt. xix. 21); "Go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and going preach, saying: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely

have you received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat. . . . And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house" (Matt. x. 6-12). If you wish to know what is at once the essence and the primitive form of the Franciscan Rule, and, I may add, if you wish to understand why that Order is even now split into some three or four divisions more or less hostile to each other, you have only to study these two passages from the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Poverty; the mission to the poor, the outcast, the sick, and the leper; the sensitive horror of money as a kind of sacrament of evil; the single habit and the bare feet; the mendicancy; and the habitual salutation used by the Friars Minor—all these features come from these two passages of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Saint Francis then, according to his custom, took the command given to the Prophet Ezekiel to apply with binding force to himself; he was to mark "thau'

upon the foreheads of all who sighed, that is, all true penitents. But, if I mistake not, there was more in it than that. It was also the symbol of the true reformer, the man who "mourned for all the abominations" then obvious in Christendom. To those who are disposed to doubt the existence of such abominations in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, I commend the letter written by Jacques de Vitry, a French prelate, in the year 1216. He found but one consolation in the religious condition of central Italy at that time—it was the movement of Saint Francis and the Friars, just then emerging into prominence.

I think it quite probable that in the present case, that is, in the autograph Blessing, the signature "T" had more than one meaning. But since we learn from Brother Leo's words (we should never have guessed it from the drawing itself) that here the "thau" was used in connection with a head—*thau cum capite*—we are surely right in concluding that it was used with conscious reference to the Prophecy of Ezekiel, and that the drawing

represents, imperfectly enough, the head or forehead of a penitent and a religious reformer. I could wish indeed that Brother Leo had written *thau cum fronte*, but after all one cannot draw a forehead without drawing a head. This then we will call the first meaning of the "T"; it is here marked upon the head of a penitent and a reformer. Its second meaning—the order is purely arbitrary, of course—was that it served to authenticate the document, for that was the Saint's usual, if not his only, form of signature. Its third meaning—for I cannot regard the division of the name Le—T—o on either side of the "T" as unintentional—was that it served also as a cross of blessing for the Brother whose name was written on either side of it. If then we ask who was the true penitent and reformer, and whose head was rudely drawn beneath the "T," there can be only one answer: Leo was the name of that penitent, Leo's head was depicted, Leo was blessed.

The thought of Saint Francis, not merely as one in whom certain prophecies found their fulfilment, but as a prophet himself,

was familiar with Saint Bonaventure. You have only to read the Prologue to his Legend to satisfy yourself of this.¹ May it not be that Saint Francis sometimes spoke of himself as one who exercised the office of a prophet in those last times, as they seemed to him and to all the choice spirits of the age? In any case, I cannot help thinking that, when he painted "thau" upon the walls of the cells in which he slept, when he made this sign with his finger on the foreheads of postulants, as surely he did, when he drew it beneath his blessing for Brother Leo, he thought of himself as exercising under a later dispensation the office performed of old by the Prophet Ezekiel.

To clench the whole matter I will quote one more passage, this time from the prologue of Saint Bonaventure's Legend (cap. ii.). It is here boldly stated that certain prophetic sayings, and especially "the similitude of the angel ascending from the rising of the sun and having the sign of

¹ "Prophetali quoque repletus spiritu . . . rationabiliter comprobatur venisse in spiritu et virtute Eliae."—*Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., vol. ii., p. 631.

the living God " (Apocalypse vii. 2), have been fulfilled in Saint Francis. Evidence of the fulfilment of this last prophecy is then given :—

Ad quod quidem fideliter sentiendum et pie . . . inducit officium, quod habuit vocandi ad fletum et planctum, calvitium et cingulum sacci, signandique Thau super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium signo poenitentialis crucis.

And we are led to feel the truth of this with faith and devotion by the mission he had to call men to weep and wail, to shave their heads and wear a girdle of haircloth, and his mission to make the sign "Tau" upon the foreheads of men that sigh and mourn, even the sign of the cross of penitence.

In view of all the evidence that has been gathered together, we should surely require some very cogent reason to persuade us, as Mr. Carmichael is persuaded, that in this, the one document left us with an example of his use of the signature "T," Saint Francis meant something quite different, and that the "T" is not a signature at all. For Mr. Carmichael, seeing a gallows where Brother Leo saw a "T," bids us "note with what humility" Saint Francis records the miracle of the Stigmata, "transforming his Cross into the gallows of the criminal."

We can only reply by asking how it was that Brother Leo missed the significance of the "T" altogether? The Blessing was given to him, and he must have known what it all meant. Why does he speak of a "T" instead of calling it a gallows, if such it was? And when the same writer asks, "Why should Saint Francis have used the letter T rather than, say, the letter F?" he had forgotten the Prologue of Saint Bonaventure's legend, and had not seen the passage about the Saint's letters (*missivæ cartulæ*) in Celano's treatise on his Miracles.

But we have to deal with stranger theories even than this of the gallows. Mgr. Faloci Pulignani, the first modern writer¹ to attempt an explanation of the strange drawing which Brother Leo's note clearly explains to be

¹ I do not count Pompeo Bini, whose *Verità scoperta ne' tre santuarii della città d'Assisi* was published at Florence in 1721; nor Prospero Lambertini (Benedict XIV.), whose *Discorso*, dealing among other things with the Autograph Blessing, was printed in the same year at Foligno. Bini invents a miracle by way of explaining *thau cum capite*, and supposes Brother Leo to mean that Saint Francis pressed the paper to his forehead (*caput*) with his hand, (*manu sua*) and that the *Tau* then miraculously appeared on the paper—a new kind of autograph signature. Benedict XIV.'s Italian pamphlet is in the British Museum, but Bini's book is not.

a head, contents himself with describing it in a parenthesis as "a kind of flower" (*una specie di fiore*). We need only point out that this does not explain the words "T with a head," while admitting that the drawing is as like "a kind of flower" as it is like or unlike anything else.

Next in order of time comes the theory put forward by the writer in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, in whose excellent article it is the only defect. He writes (vol. v. pp. 723-28, 1896): "The Tau is raised above a skull, and this last lies upon a small hill. We have here an attempt at drawing by our Saint in which, truth to tell, he has but indifferently succeeded. But his thought is not at all arbitrary; since, just as the mystic 'tau' represents the saving sign of the Cross, so do the skull and Calvary correspond well enough with its presence." But the same writer has to admit elsewhere that "if Brother Leo had said *cum cranio* (*caput* is never used of a skull, and *cranium* always is), all danger of mistake would have been excluded, even for Pompeo Bini." We may fairly ask also, why, admitting that Brother Leo calls the "skull" a head, he

fails to record that this skull is only part of the drawing and that the remainder represents Calvary?

Last in order of time, perhaps also in probability, comes the "New Light on the Benediction of Saint Francis," given by Mr. Carmichael to the readers of *St. Peter's* in February, 1900. "Saint Francis *has* drawn a mount," he writes, "but the mount is not Mount Calvary; it is—and herein consists my new light—it is Mount La Verna itself." In the article from which I quote there is reproduced an excellent photograph of Mount Alverna as it is to-day; and the writer tells us that if we "compare only for a moment the photograph . . . with the facsimile of the Blessing" we shall have "no shadow of doubt on the matter"; for "the 'hieroglyphic' outlines with, on the whole, wonderful fidelity, the entire contour of the mountain." We are told that "there can be no doubt about this fact, and it needs no scholarship to prove it; a little observation suffices."

Once more we are compelled to ask why Brother Leo, when he took pains to authenticate the Blessing and all its accessories,

did not mention the most noteworthy feature of the whole document—the drawing of Mount Alverna? For Mr. Carmichael does not wish us to take the words *thau cum capite* to mean “T with a drawing of the contour of Mount Alverna.” He has another fancy whereby to explain that awkward word, “head.” He sees in a mark, or scratch above the “T” at the point of intersection of its two lines, the head of Saint Francis himself, drawn there by him on the top, not of a “T” but of a gallows. He drew this, we are told, in order to show that “as Mount La Verna is to Mount Calvary, as the gallows of the malefactor is to the Cross of the Redeemer, so are the wounds of that worm, Francis, son of Peter Bernardone, to the agony and bitter passion of Jesus, Son of the Most High God.” This is very good; but if we do not accept the view that the “T with a head,” as the document describes the drawing, represents a gallows with Mount La Verna in contour, we shall not be pre-disposed to see in this scratch a drawing by the Saint of his own head. And in point of fact, attentive study of both sides

of the original at Assisi, or even of the reproductions of the two sides given here, will show that the mark above the "T" is nothing more nor less than a patch which has been put over a tear at some period. The patch has been pasted upon the front of the document, where is written out in the handwriting of Saint Francis the "Praise of the Most High God"; it shows through the tear, and thus makes the dark blotch in which Mr. Carmichael sees the head of Saint Francis, drawn by his own hand.

To complete my survey of the literature upon this drawing I should mention that the R. P. Edouard d'Alençon, Archivist-General of the Capuchin Order, contributed to the *Annales Franciscaines* of July, 1896,¹ an excellent article on the Blessing, in which, without laying much stress on the point, he tells us that in this rough drawing (*figure assez grossièrement dessinée*) we "must see a skull placed upon a small hill, the whole to represent the Cross planted

¹ Reprinted (Mersch, Paris, 1896) under the title, *La Bénédiction de S. François. Histoire et authenticité de la Relique d'Assise*. Père Edouard kindly gave me a copy of this pamphlet, and I have given it to the British Museum, which has not got the *Annales*.

upon Calvary." Once more our objection must be a double one, first, Brother Leo would not have used the word *caput*, but *cranium*, to describe a skull; and second, it is surely incredible that, when explaining every feature of the document, he should have omitted all reference to what, if it really be there, is the most remarkable feature of it and also the most in need of explanation, the drawing of Mount Calvary.

We are now in a position to state what will be, I hope, for most readers of this discussion foregone conclusions. Saint Francis, after writing out his own "Praise of the Most High God," gratified the wish of his intimate companion—a wish he divined with all his certainty of spiritual insight—by writing on the other side of the sheet some words used, or rather prescribed to be used, for a Blessing by Almighty God. To authenticate the document, that is, both the "Praise" and the "something memorable from the words of God," he drew beneath this last the figure T, his usual form of signature, "employed as often as Holy Charity led him to dictate any message in writing." But the words

of Blessing quoted from the Prophet Ezekiel did not after all satisfy the desires of Brother Leo. He asked for the addition of a personal Blessing addressed to him by name. This too was given him, and Saint Francis not only used his name in this second Blessing, but drew beneath his own signature a rough representation of Brother Leo's head. The temptation which had troubled the Brother, a temptation not of the flesh but of the spirit, at once left him, and he treasured the document ever after. It is largely owing to the devotion with which he carried the Blessing about with him during some forty-seven years (he died in 1271) that the "Praise" is now so illegible. But at some date after the death of Saint Francis, perhaps before the canonisation in 1228, it occurred to him to authenticate his treasure by notes. In these notes, of which there are three, he tells us first of the Lent kept by the Blessed Francis in honour of Our Lady and Saint Michael on Mount Alverna, and then says that after "the vision and speech he had of a seraph and the impression in his body of the Stigmata of Christ," he

wrote out with his own hand "these praises on the other side of the sheet." In the second note he certifies that "this Blessing" was written also by the Blessed Francis with his own hand. In the third note, while he makes no reference to the second or personal blessing addressed to himself (presumably because his second note referred to *both* blessings) he is at pains to inform posterity that certain drawings were made also by the Blessed Francis to represent a "T" together with, or resting upon, a *head*. We learn from the writings of Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure that Saint Francis, besides using "T" as his sign-manual, had a devotion to this symbol, and took a command made by Almighty God with reference to it, as reported by the Prophet Ezekiel, to apply in a particular manner to himself. When therefore we have a plain statement that the drawings represent a "T" in conjunction with a "head," it is not for us to invent elaborate fancies to account for the badness of the drawing. On the other hand, it is quite natural to attempt an explanation of the drawing by inquiring what

was the significance of the sign "T" in the passage of Holy Scripture from which Saint Francis obviously borrowed it. Here (Ezekiel ix. 2-4) we find that this sign is to be marked upon the foreheads of penitents. It is not surprising, therefore, that Saint Francis should draw the "T" as proceeding from a human head. And if we proceed to ask whose head is here represented, there can be only one answer, the head of Brother Leo. "The Lord bless thee, Brother Leo; thou sighest and mournest for all the abominations that are committed in the Church of God" (Ez. ix. 3); "thou hast the seal of God in thy forehead" (ibid.; Apoc. vii. 3; ix. 4).

Is it not significant also that God's command to mark the sign "T" upon a certain class of men was made to a "man clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side"? The sign was to be made with ink, and Saint Francis, who loved to apply to himself and carry out with the most literal fidelity an injunction given by Almighty God in Scripture, did not lose this opportunity. He drew Brother Leo's head and set upon it in ink the "seal of God."

Finally, if it be asked why the words of the personal Blessing are so awkwardly disposed on either side of the "T," I reply, not, like one writer already quoted, that the drawing left no room for the words to be properly arranged, but that the original form of this personal Blessing consisted only of the drawing of the Brother's head with the "T" upon it, and that to explain whose head was represented Saint Francis wrote above it the Brother's name. To make it clear that the "T," his signature, besides being the mark of a true penitent and the "seal of God," represented also the cross of his personal blessing for the Brother, he added the words, "The Lord bless thee." Following the practice of all MS. Missals and Office books, the cross of Blessing is placed so as to divide the name of the person blessed into its two syllables—Le✠o.¹

¹ *e.g.* "ut nobis cor✠pus et san✠guis fiat D.N.I.C."—Canon of the Mass.

VI

THE STORY OF THE ASSISI RELIC

IN conclusion, I must show cause for believing that in the Relic kept at Assisi we have the very same sheet of paper that Brother Leo brought to his Master on Mount Alverna. The history of a document is apt to be dull; but we need only step lightly from century to century. For wherever we alight we shall find the same tradition as to the identity of the Assisi Relic.

Two Inventories of the "Treasure" in the great Church of Saint Francis at Assisi were made by the Sacristans in the fourteenth century. The first of these was begun on February 15, 1338.¹ Here is what it contains with regard to the Relic in which we are interested:—

¹ At that date the Sacristans were Jacopo di Vanni, Jacopo di Venturella, and Francesco Biagio. See Pompeo Bini's *La Verità scoperta ne' tre santuarii della città d'Assisi*, Florence, 1721, pp. 139-47.

Una tabula lignea cum vitro ex utraque parte, in qua est Benedictio quam dedit S. P. Franciscus F. Leoni socio suo, scripta manu propria eiusdem dicti S. Patris, et laudes eius sunt in eadem.

A wooden frame with glass on either side, in which is the Blessing which the Holy Father Francis gave to Brother Leo his companion, written with his own hand by the said Holy Father, and his "Praises" are in the same.

You must recollect that when Brother Thomas wrote in 1247 that "the letter had been kept, and that miracles had been wrought through it" (a statement which Saint Bonaventure borrowed in the year 1260), the document was still in Brother Leo's possession. I have suggested elsewhere that he probably left it with other writings in the care of the Poor Clares at his death in 1271. We do not know how it came into the possession of the Friars Conventual at Assisi, and can say no more than that it was there by the year 1338, some sixty years after Brother Leo's death. It is evident from the description of the "wooden frame with glass on both sides" that both the Praise and the Blessing were at that time exposed in the Reliquary for the veneration of pilgrims at Assisi.

The Inventory of 1338 which has just

been quoted was an inventory in the usual sense, that is to say, a descriptive list of the valuables belonging to the Sagro Convento. The "inventory" of twelve years later had a different purpose, for it was liturgical. At the end of the first item in it we read:—

Laudetur, &c.	Et	Praiséd, &c.	And
semper in fine ostensionis		always at the end of the	
quarumcumque reliqui-		exposition of any of the	
arum sic dicatur: Laude-		relics soever let this be	
tur et benedicatur Deus.		said: Praiséd and blessed	
A.		be God. Item A.	

This shows that the "inventory" of 1350¹ was intended for use when the Relics were exposed for veneration; and in accordance with this purpose it consists of the short descriptions of the Relics which were read out as they were uplifted one by one in blessing. The item which contains the reference to the autograph document reads:—

Item. Una tabula lignea	Item. A wooden frame
in qua sunt laudes creatoris	in which are the Praises of
scriptæ de manu propria	the Creator written by the

¹ Assisi MS., No. 344, ff. 73b-78b. The date of this "liturgical inventory" is fixed by its reference (under the *item* marked "G") to a certain William, Minister General, who was elected to that office in the year 1348. See Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ad annum 1348, x.

beati Francisci. Cum benedictione facta fratri Leoni socio suo. Et de pannilineo cum quo tergebatur lacrimas, et de panno laneo cum quo cooperiebatur sacra stigmata pedum. M.

very hand of the Blessed Francis. Together with the Blessing composed for Brother Leo, his companion. And part of the linen stuff with which he would dry his tears, and part of the woollen stuff with which he used to cover the holy Stigmata on his feet. Item "M."

It is to be noticed that in 1350 the document was still in its "wooden frame," and that the Sacristans of the time regarded the "Praise" as the more important part of it. I believe this to be the earliest instance of the misleading title "Praises of the Creator."

It is good evidence of the importance attached from early times to the autographs of Saint Francis that the "liturgical inventory" contains, as a kind of appendix at the end, the text of Brother Leo's note certifying the fact of the impression of the Stigmata as well as the text of the "Praise." You will see presently that it is mainly owing to this early transcript of the Praise that we are able to reconstruct almost every word of the original, which is now so illegible.

Twenty years later, 1370, another Inventory was compiled, and it contains, I believe, an entry similar to those I have already quoted. Finally, we learn from an Inventory of 1473 that more than a century later the wooden frame had been succeeded by a "silver tabernacle"; and it is probable that by this time the side of the document on which the "Praise" was written was no longer exposed, and that the "Praise" itself was beginning to be forgotten. The entry of 1473 is as follows:—

Unum Tabernaculum	A Tabernacle of silver
de argento in quo est	in which is a document
scriptura de manu sancti	in the writing of Saint
Francisci. ¹	Francis.

And now we must step over 113 years (1473 to 1586) in order to quote a passage from the "Histories of the Seraphic Religion," written by a Conventual Father known as Peter Rodulphus of Tossignano.² Having quoted the autograph Blessing with a strange inaccuracy (his version is "May the

¹ I take this from Père Edouard's article, *Annales Franciscaines*, July 1896, p. 503.

² *Historiarum Seraphicæ Religionis*, Liber I., p. 119a (Venice, 1586).

Lord turn his face *from* thee"—*a te* instead of *ad te*) he writes :

Haec verba habentur in sacro conventu Assisii a B. Francisco scripta, una cum laude cuius initium est, Tu es Sanctus.

These words are to be found in the Sagro Convento at Assisi written out by the Blessed Francis, together with the Praise which begins, "Thou art holy."

Thirty-three years later, in the year 1619, Wadding saw the original at Assisi. I have translated elsewhere Wadding's account of how Saint Francis came to write the Blessing. Here is what he says of the subsequent history of the document.¹ "Handing this writing to Leo he said, Take this sheet, and so long as you live guard it carefully. No sooner had he accepted this little gift than all temptation vanished, and, having experienced its manifest virtue, he prized it always and never allowed it to be taken from him. *Since his death it has been carefully preserved even to this day in the Sacristy of Saint Francis's Church at Assisi among the Relics*, and has been the occasion of the miraculous restoration to perfect health of many persons."

¹ *Annales Minorum, ad annum, 1224, VII.*

And now we come to the first attack made upon the document, a hundred years after Wadding had seen it.¹

“On every first day of the month of August a solemn procession is made from the Church of St. Francis in the City of Assisi to the Church of St. Mary of the Angels outside the said City, all the Religious of the Order of St. Francis taking part in the Procession, namely, the Minors Observant and Reformed, the Minors Conventual and Capuchin. . . . The Blessing written by the hand of St. Francis is preserved in the Sacristy of the great Church dedicated in his honour in the said City of Assisi, and is carried, enclosed in a reliquary, with due honour on the first day of August in the Procession. But in the year of our Lord, 1720, a great controversy was raised, some persons maintaining that the said Procession should be forbidden (1) because of the disputes, scandals, and many other evils which arose in connection with it, and (2) because there was no proof of the *identity* of the Blessing, that is to say,

¹ Benedict XIV. *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione, &c.*, Lib. IV., Pars. ii., cap. xxv. 6. (Bologna, 1738, p. 252.)

no proof that the Blessing carried in the Procession was that which was written in the handwriting of Saint Francis, and lastly (3) because no letter written by the hand of a Saint was of such a class as to deserve a *cultus* and to be carried in Procession. It was to the interest of the Minor Conventual Fathers that the Procession should not be forbidden; and when Cardinal Vallimanus of distinguished memory, at that time Protector of the Order of Minors Conventual, asked me to put forward arguments in support of the aforesaid Religious, I brought out a pamphlet, printed at Foligno, in order to carry out this command with fitting obedience.¹ In this pamphlet (1) I demonstrated

¹ I have had the good fortune to find this pamphlet in the British Museum. It is catalogued under Benedict XIV. and has the following vague and long title:—"Discorso di Monsig. Illustriss. e rever. Prospero Lambertini, Avvocato Concistoriale, Promotore della Fede, e Segretario della Sagra Congregazione del Concilio.

Nel quale si espongono alla Sagra Congregazione specialmente deputata della Santità di N. S. Clemente XI. le ragioni de' Padri Minori Conventuali circa i punti promossi del P. Guardiano del Convento de' Minori Osservanti degli Angeli sotto Assisi, in un Memoriale a Sua Beatitudine, e circa i punti da altri promossi in altre Scritture esibite alla detta S. Congregazione Deputata." In Foligno, Pe'l Campana. Con lic. de Sup., 104 pp. Dedication dated Foligno, Jan. 20, 1721.

A Latin translation of this pamphlet appeared in Benedict XIV.'s Collected Works, vol. xiv., Prato, 1839-1847.

the antiquity of the Procession, and the special desire of the Supreme Pontiffs that it should take place every year, as may be gathered from the Brief of Clement VII. and another of Urban VIII.; (2) I suggested a method whereby the evils and scandals (which others had exaggerated) might be avoided without abolishing the Procession; (3) I collected the proofs and made evident the *identity* of the Blessing; and (4) by the examples I adduced I proved that it was the established custom that due religious *cultus* should be given to Letters written by the hand of Saints. Accordingly the Particular Congregation deputed by Clement XI. of holy memory on July 26, 1720, when the matter had been fully discussed *ad tramites juris*, decided that no change should be made, but that the Procession should continue to be held, and that in it the Blessing in the handwriting of Saint Francis and addressed to Brother Leo should continue to be carried."

In the Italian pamphlet, written by the same Prospero Lambertini, afterwards Pope Benedict XIV., there is a long examination

of the point, "whether the Blessing which the Holy Father Saint Francis gave to the Ven. Leo is the very same as that which is preserved in the Sacristy at Assisi and which is carried in Procession." The age was not scientific, and Prospero Lambertini barely refers to the "Inventories, made many hundred years ago, of the relics which are in the Church and in the Sacristy of Assisi." "The Blessing given by Saint Francis to the Ven. Leo is described in them. Moreover, the Religious of the said Convent and the best qualified Citizens of Assisi declare that such is the universal belief, and that they have always heard from their forebears that the Blessing which is preserved among the relics in the Sacristy of Assisi and which is carried in the Procession is that which was given by Saint Francis to the Ven. Leo, and that various graces and various miracles have continuously followed when it has been applied to the diseased."

His conclusion is that there is surely no one who by reasonable arguments can contend that the Blessing which is preserved in the Sacristy of Assisi is not the very

same as that which was given by Saint Francis to the Ven. Leo; it being known that in this matter of the identity of relics probability and moral certainty are enough.

The result was a decree of the "Particular Congregation deputed by the Holy Father and held on the 26th July 1720 *in causa Assisiensi* between the Fathers Minor Observant of the one part and the Fathers Minor Conventual of the other part." This decree states that the Congregation had "heard the reasons brought forward from various quarters concerning the Procession and the other functions wont to be held on the occasion of the solemn festivity and Plenary Indulgence, commonly called the Indulgence of the Porziuncola, the first party requesting some provision with the object of avoiding the alleged scandals, and the second party asking that no change be made." And the conclusion of the whole matter was "that the usual custom be observed, and letters addressed to the Governor of Perugia and their Eminences the Cardinal Protectors." On the 3rd of August 1720, "the Holy Father approved the aforesaid resolution."¹

¹ *Discorso*, p. 104.

And so from 1720 until 1895 the document remained in possession and none attacked it. But in 1895 a stimulus was given to the study of the autographs of Saint Francis by the discovery of the Letter to Brother Leo at Spoleto; and a certain German Professor of the University of Freiburg gave it as his opinion that the relic was not authentic, and that a careful examination of the writing (he had himself only seen a poor facsimile) would show that it was of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. I will not detail the arguments by which this view was refuted; the names¹ of the great authorities on palæography who gave a verdict favourable to the identity of the relic are sufficient guarantee of the soundness of the arguments which convinced them. But there is one amusing detail: Professor Kraus, somewhat disconcerted by the verdict of these eminent men, retired to what one may call the last ditch, and said boldly that, as the other side of the document was not exposed, it probably did not contain the "Praises of

¹ Wattenbach of Berlin; Dziatzko and Meyer of Göttingen. See *Theol. Literatur-Zeitung*, Leipzig, 1895, pp. 404 and 627.

the Lord" mentioned in the note said to have been written by Brother Leo, and therefore the whole document was a fraud. Upon which the Reliquary was solemnly opened, and for the first time for many centuries (probably the first time since 1473), the "Praise" was exposed. The present reliquary allows the pilgrim to see both sides of the document; and one may hope that the autograph will remain without further attack for a few more centuries.

We may fitly conclude with the words which "are always to be said at the end of the exposition of any of the relics":—

Laudetur et benedicatur Deus.

Praiséd and Blessed be God.

VII

AFTERWORD

IT is to my mind impossible to account for the power which the very name of Saint Francis of Assisi exercises over those who contrive to remain external to the Church for which alone he gave his life. But, whatever be the secret bond between him and the best of modern Anglicans, the fact of his immense popularity with them is evident and must be reckoned with. For the vogue of Saint Francis, though we welcome it as a happy omen of the future, presents certain dangers. "Those who are not with us are against us," and we cannot allow his name to become the symbol of a movement essentially hostile to the Catholic and Roman Church.

We are particularly in danger of getting an incomplete idea of the central fact of the life of Saint Francis—I mean the Miracle of the Holy Stigmata. Not that those writers

on Franciscan subjects who have the ear of the public deny the miracle itself; their own canons of historical criticism forbid such scepticism. Renan, indeed, had no doubts upon the matter: the miracle was due, he thought, to illusion or to fraud, and *à priori* there could be no other alternative. It is otherwise with M. Paul Sabatier, who has this advantage over his master Renan that he has made a profound study of the original documents, and has (so far as possible, which is not very far) eliminated from his study of Saint Francis his personal bias. The fact of the impression of the Stigmata of our Lord upon the body of His closest follower since the Apostles is as well established as any other fact of history. To deny it would be to place the historian beyond the pale.

It is not denial we have to fear; it is rather the tendency to minimise the significance of what is admitted, not without some natural reluctance, to be a fact of history. We are invited to dwell rather upon the "Stigmata of the Heart" than upon the miracle, for the miracle was but an outward and visible sign of his close

individualist union with God. The idea at the bottom of this was beautifully expressed long since in the Legend of the Three Companions: "From that hour his heart was so wounded in memory of the Passion of the Lord that throughout his life he bore the Stigmata of the Lord Jesus in his heart."¹ Can we properly look upon this stigmatisation of the heart as the more important? For if we do, the great miracle itself must be dismissed as purposeless. Refinement is not one of the reproaches, the *improperia*, often levelled against Catholicism in this country. We do not boast a spirituality above poor material facts. The Miracle of the Stigmata is a fact, and as such, I hope, we shall continue to honour it.

If you will consider for a moment how few miracles are certified by the contemporary statement of an eye-witness, how few have actually been recorded as the miracle of the Stigmata is recorded in the

¹ "Ab illa itaque hora ita vulneratum est cor eius ad memoriam dominicæ passionis, quod semper dum vixit stigmata Domini Iesu in corde suo portavit."—*Legenda 3 Sociorum*, cap. xiv.

"Praise of the Most High God,"¹ by the actual recipient of the miraculous favour, you will perhaps be disposed to concede that two miracles only since the Ascension of our Lord stand on this high historical footing—the Conversion of Saint Paul and the Wounding of Saint Francis. History records no higher manifestation of God's love toward His saints. No other miracle has been reported with so much circumstance on such unquestionable testimony, preserved as this is in its original form. Apart from the continuous tradition of the identity of this autograph evidence, the successive attacks made upon it during the six and three-quarter centuries of its existence have only served to enhance its importance.

In our own times photography and its allied arts have placed this precious piece of evidence in the hands of all who care to have such things. Who knows but that the words which acted as so powerful a

¹ "Gratias agens Deo de beneficio sibi collato," writes Brother Leo, and this is the testimony of an eye-witness to the purpose with which the "Praise of the Most High God" was written.

talisman against temptation in the case of Brother Leo may not exercise a similar power with ourselves, though we carry about with us only "the shadow of a shadow, at three removes from truth"? It is in this hope that I commend to you my studies in the words of an unknown Friar Observant of the seventeenth century: "Your Pieties may please to use it, and upon your own experiences to communicate it safely to all who desire it."

THE END

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